Charity, Children and Its Challenges: Save the Children, Child Sponsorship and Advertising in the 1980s

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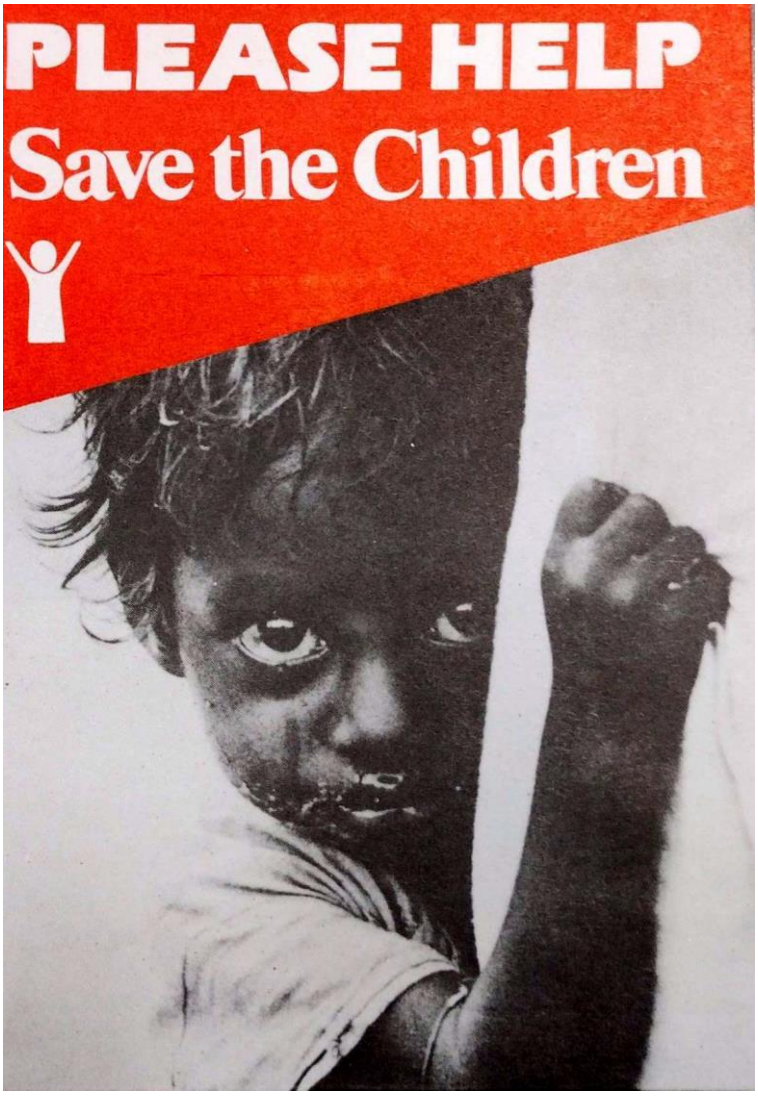

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Image on Cover: “Please Help,” collecting envelope, Feb 1983, SCF/FR/8/3/1, Save the Children Fund Archive, University of Birmingham.

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Introduction

When asked to imagine an advertisement for a humanitarian organisation, a lot of people will come up with roughly the same core aspects: a child in peril, non-descript desolate backgrounds and a message that *you*, as the audience, are the only one who can help. Advertising humanitarian efforts, although the style has changed as the twentieth century has progressed into the twenty-first, has been an important facet of the fundraising efforts of aid organisations in the increasingly professionalised field.[1] Before the twentieth century, providing aid was usually a local effort, but missionaries becoming involved in the anti-slavery and anti-trafficking movement in the nineteenth century showed that international involvement in communities geographically disparate has very deep roots in international relations.[2] The twentieth century, however, saw an explosion of renewed interest in helping communities perceived to be less fortunate, and through this drive for improvement of living conditions all over the world, the field of humanitarian aid organisations was allowed to thrive.

One profitable way of raising funds for international Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) has proven to be child sponsorship, where the potential donor is invited to select a single child that they send money to each month in order to improve their living situation. For some major aid organisations, child sponsorship brings in about half of their annual income, with Compassion, a Christian-based organisation even reporting in 2021 that 68 percent of their revenue stemmed from child sponsorship.[3] Other aid organisations, however, who used to be prominent in the field like Save the Children have in recent years mostly abandoned this way of fundraising. Sponsorship is a practice which has continued to be relevant to the humanitarian field far beyond its beginning years, and even though the structure differs between organisations and has evolved through the years, for many it has not lost its or appeal of allowing personal contact between donor and donation recipient. For most organisations it is not the only way of raising money, but due to its longevity and its appeal to

[1] Anne Vestergaard, "Humanitarian Appeal and the Paradox of Power," *Critical Discourse Studies* 10, no. 4 (2013): 444.
[2] Mark Swatek-Evenstein, *History of Humanitarian Intervention* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020), 117.
[3] Compassion UK, *Annual report and Financial Statements 2021/2022* (Hampshire: Compassion UK, 2022), 50, accessed May 31, 2023, https://indd.adobe.com/view/c8ac5c39-ba9e-4512-9844-811134275855.

loyalty between different actors, it is a type of fundraising that is worth further exploration in the history of humanitarianism.

Although child sponsorship has started to gain more attention in recent years, it still warrants more academic research. It is a form of fundraising that has garnered both fervent supporters as well as strong critics, as explored various different works like *Child Sponsorship: Exploring Pathways to a Brighter Future*, which follows the long and complex history of child sponsorship and humanitarianism.[4] Many organisations have ties to colonial attitudes and structures of power, making international aid a topic of a lot of debates surrounding ethics.[5] Child sponsorship has also been explored at times through various different lenses, for instance looking at the capitalist structures which encourage this type of behaviour has previously also been discussed, with changing a child's life being as easy as selecting "add to basket."[6] However, there is still a lot of ground that should be covered in order to create a more complete understanding of international aid organisations. This thesis will first explore the work of other academics in order to see possible fault-lines in humanitarianism, a progression of certain practices and an abandonment of others, and the manner in which aid organisations sought to help in the course of the twentieth century. By doing so, I intend to answer the research question: What methods did Save the Children use to advertise their sponsorship programmes in the 1980s, and how did political and social developments of that time influence the way that these methods were employed?

In order to allow for a nuanced and thorough investigation into the topic of humanitarian aid and child sponsorship more specifically, this thesis uses Save the Children as a case study, since it is an organisation with a long history in child sponsorship and one which still maintains a high profile in the humanitarian world. Save the Children's child sponsorship programmes, which they maintained in different forms throughout the twentieth century, reflect the public opinion surrounding aid at the time that the projects were active. While at first direct cash donations were seen as the most practical way to run child sponsorship projects, towards the end of the century Save the Children decided on a more

[4] Brad Watson and Matthew Clarke, *Child Sponsorship: Exploring Pathways to a Brighter Future* (London: Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2014).
[5] Emily Baughan, "'Every Citizen of Empire Implored to Save the Children!' Empire, Internationalism and the Save the Children Fund in Inter-War Britain," *Historical Research : the Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research* 86, no. 231 (2013): 132.
[6] Vincci Li, "'Shopping for Change': World Vision Canada and Consumption-Oriented Philanthropy in the Age of Philanthrocapitalism," *VOLUNTAS: International Journal of Voluntary and Nonprofit Organizations* 28, no. 2 (2017): 461.

community-based approach, where one child serves as a representative for their local community but the money is invested in a way that benefits everyone in their surroundings rather than focussing on one child. The reactive nature of the changes made to child sponsorship makes it an interesting fundraising method to study, since it is indicative of larger trends in the humanitarian world. It was also a form of humanitarianism which received a lot of attention due to the high amount of advertising around it. With the explosive rise of aid organisations in the 1970s, NGOs increasingly had to compete for donations, and sponsorship was effective since it did not attract one-time donors but instead encouraged long-term commitments. Advertisements are an important way of deciphering what humanitarian organisations believed the public valued about their work and see what they thought was attractive to those who did not know about their organisation before.

Save the Children as an organisation has been investigated through different avenues, but by exploring the archival material kept by Save the Children in Birmingham, I am able to add a new dimension to the topic. Though due to privacy concerns not the entire archive was available to me, there was still a wealth of information that is not being held under these restrictions which allowed me to explore the topic from within the institution. Focal points for me are sponsorship documents, with leaflets which were distributed in my research period promoting child sponsorship, reports on the characteristics of donors and why they chose to sponsor a child. They have interestingly also kept articles which dissuade the public from child sponsorship, including an article titled "please do not sponsor this child" which was published in the *New Internationalist*. By using these resources which have not been used by a lot of scholars in the past, it is possible to explore the reasoning behind child sponsorship as well as looking at what strategies the organisation used to encourage child sponsorship in this period. The fact that they kept articles which discouraged sponsorship also suggests an awareness of a debate going on in the world of NGOs about the practice. Using this archival material allows for a new perspective on this practice in the 1980s and provides some new insight into the actions of aid organisations in this period.

When discussing the history of child sponsorship by NGOs, I will not be the first to make this attempt. Hillary Kaell has written on the subject before, using the staggering timespan of 1700 until 1950 in order to prove that the concept of child sponsorship is far from recent, and that the accreditation of Save the Children with the creation of child sponsorship

in 1919 is false.[7] Kaell posits that sponsorship originated with missionaries, something that scholars like Catherine Hall support with the study of Baptist missionaries in Jamaica in the nineteenth century as a humanitarian effort linked with colonialism.[8] Kaell's study is an excellent starting point for exploring the history of child sponsorship, but due to its scope, it primarily covers child sponsorship through a birds-eye perspective, exploring the topic with an immense amount of breadth but leaving little space for depth. Beyond this, she also chose to end her timeline at the 1950s, which means she is able to keep her perspective on religious groups who pioneered child sponsorship, but does not cover the era which will be discussed in this thesis. By exploring the 1980s in more detail, it is possible to see in what way trends in child sponsorship changed with time, and what kind of characteristics remained.

The 1980s also saw a period of famine in Ethiopia which has been described as "an earthquake in the humanitarian world," with the public paying increased attention to the tragedy, and aid organisations were criticised in hindsight for their lack of appropriate response and their willingness to work with the regime which in part caused the famine.[9] It also can be said that this period gave rise to "celebrity humanitarianism." Publicity campaigns like these, despite being widely criticised for their perpetuation of stereotypes and paternalist messages, became a mainstay for a lot of NGOs in the period that followed, with highly publicised crises continuing to attract a lot more funding than long-term, less noticeable suffering until this day.[10] Beyond the scope of humanitarian organisations, the Western world increasingly seemed to embrace neoliberalist ideals which promoted self-sufficiency and reductions of government programmes helping the poor, as well as a decade which faced a serious global economic recession at the start.[11] This seems like a period in which the public might turn away from donating large amounts of money to foreign nations, both due to a shift in ideology and due to financial circumstances, but in actuality this did not turn out to be the case. People in the West were very willing to donate money to causes abroad, and sponsorship programmes were a popular means of doing this.

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[7] Hillary Kaell, "The long history of child sponsorship, c.1700–1950," *Historical Research: The Bulletin of the institute of Historical Research* 95, no. 267 (2022).
[8] Catherine Hall, *Civilising Subjects: Metropole and Colony in the English Imagination, 1830-1867* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2002).
[9] Matthias Kuhnert, "NGOs, Celebrity Humanitarianism and the Media," in *Humanitarianism and Media*, ed. Johannes Paulmann, 1st ed. (New York, NY: Berghahn Books, 2018), 263.
[10] Michael N. Barnett and Thomas G. Weiss, "Humanitarianism: A Brief History of the Present," in *Humanitarianism in Question: Politics, Power, Ethics* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2008), 1.
[11] David Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 2.

Additionally, this thesis will at several points explore resistance to child sponsorship and the way the public and aid organisations pushed back against it. Discussions in newspapers and in internal debates about alternatives stress the contentious nature of international child sponsorship in this period, and give an insight into the wider context of child sponsorship. Child sponsorship explains the reason why people give money, and this method of giving can also be said to serve the ideals of individualism and free choice, with people focussing on helping one child instead of the entire community. Through this research, I seek to broaden the knowledge of child sponsorship in this period, as well as casting a light on the marketing techniques that organisations like Save the Children used to appeal to their audience.

The importance of exploring the role of child sponsorship and the history of humanitarianism becomes apparent when the scope and the influence of humanitarian organisations is analysed. According to some estimates, about 3 billion US dollars a year is spent in the field of humanitarianism specifically targeted towards sponsorship of vulnerable children, a number which equals the budget of governmental US foreign aid.[12] According to a study which discusses the efficacy of aid organisations, about 9 million children in the world were part of an international sponsorship programme in 2013, showing that the influence of the practice is hard to ignore.[13] Clearly, marketing humanitarian assistance through individual child sponsorship works for the agencies that take part in it, and understanding this process better can be crucial for understanding why this grew into the phenomenon it is today.

Additionally, discussions on its efficacy and the potential good it can do indicate interesting findings. The aforementioned study, which interviewed 10,144 individuals who had been in touch with child sponsorship through Compassion UK, both as participants, parents, as well as non-selected children for the programme, reported that they had a higher level of stable employment, moved into white-collar jobs more often and had increased self-confidence due to the programme.[14] The conclusion to whether international child sponsorship "works" seems to be a resounding yes in their research. However, not everyone is quite as positive. A study published in 2022 poses that children who communicate with their sponsor do show increased level of confidence, but also caution that when a sponsor ceases communication or does not send gifts when other sponsors do it can lead to insecurity and a

[12] Bruce Wydick, Paul Glewwe, and Laine Rutledge, "Does International Child Sponsorship Work? A Six-Country Study of Impacts on Adult Life Outcomes," *The Journal of Political Economy* 121, no. 2 (2013): 400.
[13] Ibid.
[14] Wydick, Glewwe, and Rutledge, "Does International Child Sponsorship Work?" 394.

feeling of failure.[15] It can also lead to social isolation due to jealousy and the feeling that one child is being privileged over the rest of the community, leading to traditional support systems being withdrawn from families of sponsored children.[16] Sponsorship can thus be both highly effective, while still contentious within communities. The fact that sponsorship keeps evolving to fit the times shows that it is a representation of the flexibility of its appeal.

Writing about child sponsorship and humanitarianism more generally is frequently plagued by either a highly positive view of the field, seeing it as true altruism and a representation of the "one family of man" that some agencies perpetuate, or is written off as neo-colonial actions by Western nations to either assuage guilt or to maintain their influence on the colonies they lost. By analysing child sponsorship without subscribing to either of these manners of thinking, it is possible to explain its popularity and potential flaws without discounting the potential good it may do. While opinionated pieces cannot be avoided in fields as complex and nuanced as this, an approach that tries to negate this somewhat can be very valuable.

This thesis will be divided into several sections in order to properly explore the topic at hand. After a brief discussion of the work by other academics, the background of the topic will be discussed. This will entail a brief overview of the famine in Ethiopia as well as the political circumstances in the West in order to explain the political events that donors were facing. I will also briefly discuss the foundational events of Save the Children and child sponsorship. The following chapter will cover a core idea included in Michael Barnett's work, that domination and emancipation often work together in humanitarian organisations. This can be seen in advertisements as well as internal documents discussing the selection process of children eligible for child sponsorship. To follow up on this idea of exclusivity, the next chapter describes the letter-writing campaigns used by Save the Children, and the way that writing letters and the feeling that aid is individual and exclusive can be linked to European and American neoliberalist ideas which made them attractive to the potential sponsor, as well as letter writing's influence as a marketing technique. The final chapter will discuss the influence of mass marketing in the field of humanitarianism in general, with Live Aid and benefit concerts like it having brought humanitarianism into view for the greater public and made being a part of aid a glamorous and entertaining choice. This chapter also covers the

[15] Simon Feeny, Matthew Clarke, Gill Westhorp, Michael Jennings, and Cara Donohue, "Impacts of Child Sponsorship Communications: Findings from World Vision Programmes," *Development in Practice ahead-of-print*, no. ahead-of-print (2022): 6.
[16] *Id.,* 7.

imagery often used by large published events like Live Aid and those like it, using starving babies and shocking texts to make their point. Unintentionally, Live Aid unintentionally sparked this debate leading to these exploitative images becoming less prevalent in the years that followed their work. By taking this approach, the topic of child sponsorship promotion can be explored thoroughly and from different angles, giving an accurate insight into the way that the practice evolved and thrived in this period.

Narrative is an extremely important facet of humanitarian work. Aid organisations promote their work as being altruistic and in a manner which suggests that without them, vulnerable people are left behind in terrible conditions, a narrative which is essential in order to raise enough money for their work. By using the material kept by the Save the Children archive, it is possible to gain an insight into the self-image of Save the Children and organisations like them. Using their own archive kept in Birmingham is thus an excellent resource in order to understand the fundraising decisions made by the organisation at this time. However, without contrasting this narrative with other NGOs as well as non-humanitarian publications, it is hard to gauge the actual role that Save the Children's sponsorship programme played in wider society. By using newspaper reports it is possible to get a more precise picture of the organisation and its societal influence at the time. This thesis thus takes a multifaceted approach to child sponsorship and international aid in general in order to better understand it, since humanitarianism never occurs without impacting wider culture. It is worth mentioning that while this thesis seeks multiple perspectives with the topic, one important voice will unfortunately not be available to me: that of the sponsored children. Due to privacy concerns as well as the scope of this research, these insights will have to be provided through the material of field researchers, which means that biases and the difficulties of second-hand accounts cannot be entirely avoided. This thesis thus does not seek to speak about the actual experience of child sponsorship, a topic which has been little explored even by researchers who are commissioned by aid organisations themselves, but instead focusses on the impact NGOs sought to have on a Western audience. In approaching the research in this manner, the way in which Save the Children was impacted in their marketing by the events of the 1980s will become more clear, shedding some light on the history of humanitarianism in the twentieth century.

It is also crucial to recognise that to a certain extent, all aid contains a triangle of power relations which complicates the humanitarian mission significantly. The donor, the organisation and the aid recipient all play important roles in the humanitarian landscape, but

this does not imply that this relationship is equal. Without the donor and those they provide aid to, the organisation does not exist, but without the organisation, the aid recipient has no way to maintain ties with the donor. This complex power dynamic which empowers and neglects these parties at different times is an important consideration when exploring humanitarianism, and as will become apparent in the coming chapters, these power relations are in no way fixed and are constantly changing, with different parties gaining dominance at different times. This dynamic exchange of power is pivotal for understanding humanitarian history, and will thus return as an analytical concept throughout this thesis.

Key Theories

While humanitarianism as both a business and as large-scale acts of charity is not new, the study of this field by academics is relatively recent, and the discussion of the topic by historians even more so. The topic of humanitarianism, when it was studied in an academic setting, was more often than not primarily focussed on international relations and the political implications of practicing humanitarianism. The idea that humanitarianism should benefit from research is stressed repeatedly by academics, for instance by John Prendergast who explicitly states that he seeks to improve current practices rather than reflecting, positively or negatively, on the actions of the past.[17] However, the focus on the present and improving practices now neglects to recognise the importance of humanitarian's past in how it behaves today.

This focus on the present rather than the past is also intensified by a sense of disconnect between humanitarian actors, who have lived experiences in the field they of international aid, and academics, who seek to explore larger trends. According to academics, doing more research into the long-term impact of humanitarian projects could help prevent the unintended negative consequences of aid.[18] In contrast with this, according to aid workers, academics are too cynical about their work and the good that they could be doing, and academics' insistence on long, expensive as well as extensive research projects could cost people their lives in times of crisis.[19] This created an environment in the past of mutual distrust where little communication occurred between aid organisations and the academics studying them, and as a consequence aid workers who could actually implement the suggestions scholars made only heard of them in passing or not at all.[20] This shows that there is value in studying humanitarianism as well as maintaining a sense of collaboration between scholars and aid workers, since it can benefit both parties if they are willing to accept a kind of partnership.

The hostile attitude towards each other does seem to be changing however, with different academics interviewed about the topic in 2018 stating that collaborations with the

[17] John Prendergast, *Frontline Diplomacy: Humanitarian Aid and Conflict in Africa* (Boulder, Col: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1996), 2.
[18] Tanja Schümer, *New humanitarianism: Britain and Sierra Leone, 1997-2003* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan Studies in Development, 2008), 126.
[19] Schümer, *New Humanitarianism,* 126.
[20] *Id.,* 142.

aid organisations proved to be exceptionally rewarding, allowing both sides of the debate to see the challenges in humanitarianism as well as the limitations of their respective fields of work.[21] While numerous histories of major aid organisations like the International Red Cross or Amnesty International have been written in the past, this recent willingness to allow collaboration between theory-driven academics and experienced aid workers has led to more nuanced and complex insights into the field of humanitarianism in recent years. A couple of works in this area stand out as being fundamental for the study of humanitarian projects, and in this chapter these works will be discussed in more detail. Michael Barnett's work seeks to represent a timeline of events and themes in the humanitarian world, representing key themes important to my analysis. The role of professionalisation and the influence of profit in the non-profit industry is incredibly important to discuss when looking at the influence of neoliberalism on humanitarianism, something that Stephen Hopgood and Michael Mascarenhas explore in detail. Save the Children, due to its prominence and long existence has also been studied through various different means, and these forms of analysis are also crucial to my understanding of the organisation and their different practices over time. By introducing the key concepts present in their works it is possible to understand my choice of case study and the analysis present in my work.

Michael Barnett

Michael Barnett's *Empire of Humanity: A History of Humanitarianism* frames itself as being one of the first historical accounts of modern humanitarianism. His scope is extensive, he introduces a range of influential concepts which are still used in the study of humanitarianism, and the book proved to be exceedingly successful in the academic field of international aid. In a sense, Barnett's work started and steered a conversation surrounding humanitarianism that had previously been focussed on present problems and solutions, giving humanitarianism the long and complex past back which was previously largely ignored by scholars.

Beyond discussing the key events within humanitarianism in his time frame, which he divides up into imperial humanitarianism, neo-humanitarianism and liberal humanitarianism, he also seeks to go into the motives and key forces that he believes continue to return throughout this period.[22] He speaks of humanitarianism as a field that is fraught with paradoxes, with humanitarianism being both universal and circumstantial, since our values

[21] Matthew Hilton, Eleanor Davey, Bronwen Everill, Kevin O'Sullivan, Tehila Sasson, and Emily Baughan, "History and Humanitarianism: A Conversation," *Past & Present* 241, no. 1 (2018): E33.
[22] Michael N. Barnett, *Empire of Humanity* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2011), 7.

play an integral role into what we consider a crisis and who is in need of help, as well as being defined by emancipation as well as domination.[23] These paradoxes are important in understanding and explaining the reasons behind the continued popularity of humanitarianism, since it is not always based solely in rational actions and heavily involves the emotions of the donors and the aid workers themselves.

Barnett does not shy away from the darker side of humanitarianism, stressing its paternalistic approach to " helping" other people without asking them what they might need, but in contrast with other texts written about the topic, he never fully rejects the compassion that aid workers say drives their work. In Barnett's work, the role of organisations is secondary to the reason why human beings as individuals participate in humanitarianism, which is an important reason as to why he is able to discuss a time scale as large as he does, since the circumstances may change, but the people and their motivations remain similar. Barnett states that "humanitarianism is sustained by a particular story we tell ourselves – that we are good, loving individuals," and this proclamation explains how he thinks that humanitarianism is kept alive: we choose to see ourselves as good, and when this belief is shaken through injustice or crises, we want to rectify this belief in our innate goodness.[24] Barnett's work is full of statements which seek to encapsulate all of humanitarianism, exemplified by "we pledge to become the people we said we were," when discussing why people would want to take part in humanitarian work. However, this argumentation mirrors humanitarian reasoning, not necessarily based on fact alone but filled with emotional appeals and grand claims.

Although the mechanics of aid distribution is a crucial field of study and whether monetary aid is efficient is a topic of much debate, Barnett discusses something that is active beneath all of the practical and quantifiable data that plays a role in humanitarian aid studies. Choosing to participate in international aid at times seems irrational, with events like the Rwandan genocide proving that at times humanitarian aid does not improve a situation but makes it worse.[25] Barnett embraces this irrationality and delves into the subjective reasons that people seek to participate in international aid, focussing primarily on emotions because

[23] Barnett, *Empire of Humanity,* 9.
[24] *Id.,* 26.
[25] The Role of humanitarian organisations during the Rwandan genocide is explored in more detail in works like: Dean J. White, *The Ignorant Bystander? Britain and the Rwandan Genocide of 1994* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2016) ; Bertrand Taithe, Jean-Herve Bradol, and Marc Le Pape, *Humanitarian Aid, Genocide and Mass Killings: Médecins Sans Frontières, the Rwandan Experience 1982-1997* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2017).

ultimately, most people do not act solely on data and rational reasoning alone. As evidence of this, Barnett quotes Save the Children's Eglantyne Jebb, who hated fundraising despite the task being crucial to her role as one of the founding figures of the organisation. Jebb stated that "I knew perfectly well that I was killing myself, and that I was killing myself for nothing," encapsulating this simultaneous feeling of irrationality and determination present in humanitarian action.[26]

Humanitarianism is a field which became a major industry towards the end of the twentieth century, and has become increasingly like for-profit corporations in its appearance, although it still maintains key differences. Barnett discusses with his work that humanitarianism is kept afloat by people who are willing to die for their chosen mission, even if it does not make sense to do so and despite proof at times that their actions are doing little to help. As Barnett himself concludes, "humanitarianism begins and ends with faith, it sustains and is sustained by faith," and with this he does not only mean the religious kind of faith.[27] Keeping the subjective aspect of people participating in humanitarian aid is important for understanding why aid organisations have grown in the manner they have. It also shows why people feel drawn to projects like child sponsorship, which are directed at small and personal impact in a manner which allows people to feel like they are making a difference, a subjective feeling rather than an objective statement of fact. Barnett's approach allows for a more nuanced and richer insight into the reasons for humanitarian aid, and allows for a view on a field that is filled with seeming contradictions and moral challenges.

Stephen Hopgood, Michael Mascarenhas and the Topic of Money

While Barnett's work is a good entry point into the study of why people participate in humanitarianism, there are many different authors who bring up various ethical issues that come with humanitarian aid in an effort to complicate our understanding of the field. For many aid workers, for-profit corporations getting involved with providing aid is seen as problematic, since they do not do so because of truly altruistic considerations. However, this notion of altruism needs to explored not only regarding aid and for-profit corporations, but also within the entire institution of providing aid as a whole. A veteran aid worker described himself and others around him as "selfish altruists," who give to others but expect power, esteem and social status in return for their work.[28] This connects to Barnett's belief in the fact

[26] Barnett, *Empire of Humanity,* 42.
[27] *Id.*, 237.
[28] Barnett and Weiss, *Humanitarianism in Question,* 12.

that people participate in humanitarianism because it allows them to believe they are good people, an act which can be perceived to be selfish in its own right. Thus, the opinion that corporations should not participate in humanitarian work due to their less than pure intentions does not hold up when considering most of the rest of the field.

Despite this, there is still a feeling of distrust when corporations get involved in providing help to people in need. Stephen Hopgood, who wrote *The Endtimes of Human Rights,* discusses Walmart's involvement with crisis aid in Haiti. While Hopgood has no pretences about Walmart's motives, also seemingly disagrees with the moralistic attitude by some of those in the field of humanitarian aid. "Do the dying care, *in extremis,* who feeds or bandages them, or why?" is the question he poses when discussing Walmart's case.[29] In *The Endtimes of Human Rights* he argues that there should be a split between Human Rights, upper case, as exemplified by the United Nations as an institution and human rights, lower case, as we believe them to be: unalienable rights that every person should have access to.[30] In his work on humanitarianism, Hopgood makes the same distinction between individual and institutional motives, being more supportive of the former than the latter. Hopgood states that Walmart is not unique as a corporation who wants to profile themselves as being benevolent, and that major aid organisations are often run very similarly to Walmart, with a board and CEO with large salaries.[31] While there seems to be the instinctual feeling that there are "right" and "wrong" reasons to participate in humanitarian work, cases like the one Hopgood discusses with Walmart prove that it is perhaps wise to look beyond this black and white interpretation of what aid is and what it should be. Although motives to participate in aid are important facets of what keeps the field afloat, it is valuable to not make judgement calls regarding these motives, since outcome of this aid is also a crucial point of discussion.

There is another form of fundraising that has equally been criticised for straying from the "pure" motives that organisations like the Red Cross and Save the Children advocate for. Michael Mascarenhas discusses this topic surrounding Acumen, a firm which themselves state they are "changing the way the world tackles poverty."[32] Acumen takes donations, invests these donations either by lending or by taking stakes in products and private businesses in the country they are trying to help, in hopes that by boosting the economy, these corporations will

[29] Stephen Hopgood, "Saying no to Walmart?" in *Humanitarianism in Question: Politics, Power, Ethics*, ed. Michael Barnett and Thomas Weiss (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2008), 103.
[30] Stephen Hopgood, *The Endtimes of Human Rights* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2013), VIII.
[31] Stephen Hopgood, "Saying no to Walmart?" 112.
[32] "Changing the Way the World Tackles Poverty," Acumen, accessed Jan 6, 2023, https://acumen.org/.

serve the poor.[33] When their invested money fails to reach the people in need in a country, Acumen starts playing an active role in these corporation since they suspect the "culture of management" in a country to be the cause of it."[34] Crucially, they want to reframe the way that the global West thinks about the nations they invest in. According to them, the recipients of aid should be seen as self-possessed individuals who can choose what is in their own best interest.[35] Freedom of choice and a free market is what they believe will revolutionise the aid industry. As Mascarenhas discusses however, it seems counterproductive to solve the problem of poverty through management techniques which in many cases led to the poverty, with capitalism and competition being its driving force.[36] While Mascarenhas is clearly deeply critical of Acumen and organisations like it, providing aid in this manner is an important development in the humanitarian aid world that needs to be discussed when looking at the late twentieth into the early twenty-first century. Organisations like Acumen reflect not only a belief in the healing powers of capitalism, but also a trust in individualism and a move away from seeing people aid organisation seek to serve as victims towards seeing them as participants in their own situation. This kind of reasoning expands far beyond Acumen's limited case study and can be seen in many new initiatives in the humanitarian realm.

In the period following the Cold War capitalist values were held not only in the world of humanitarianism, but in all facets of life, and this is reflected in what projects people donated to in aid organisations. Child sponsorship, in its most base form, is choosing a child for an attribute that appeals to you and reflects a desire for free choice. Additionally, donating on an individual basis rather than attempting to support an entire village, country or even continent appeals to the same individualist tendencies. Projects like child sponsorship and organisations like Acumen fit well into the general mindset of this period, which is heavily focussed on individualism. As Hopgood suggests, it is hard to imagine that those in crisis are able to turn away help if it is offered, so the personal choice touted as a new form of humanitarianism primarily still rests on the side of the donor, not the person receiving the donation. This is the same in sponsorship cases, where the person can select the child they donate to, but the child has no choice in the relationship created by these actions.

[33] "Manifesto," Acumen, accessed Jan 6, 2023, https://acumen.org/manifesto/.
[34] Michael Mascarenhas, *New Humanitarianism and the Crisis of Charity: Good Intentions on the Road to Help* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2017), 93.
[35] *Id.,* 96.
[36] *Id.,* 99.

Barnett stated all aid was a struggle between emancipation and domination, and these cases truly represent this tug of war very accurately. Choice and individualism is stressed, giving a semblance of greater freedom, but in reality this freedom rarely extends throughout the entirety of a relationship between donor, aid organisation and aid recipient, which does not even consider the wider community that an aid recipient might live in. Exploring the way that money moves throughout this web of connections, what the reasoning is and where every actor is positioned in relation to this money is crucial for understanding why certain projects are successful and why people choose to donate.

Marta Zarzycka and Save the Children

Save the Children as an organisation has been discussed numerous times throughout its history, both exploring its links to colonialism, as Emily Braughan does in her work, as well as its structure as an international organisation as explored by Maren Olene Kloster.[37] Additionally, research about the organisation's history has been commissioned by Save the Children themselves, coming together in their "100 years for children" project on their website.[38] However, the work done by Marta Zarzycka highlights Save the Children's focus on child sponsorship specifically, as well as covering the way that advertising with children represents some challenges. Her primary focus rests on the way children are photographed to represent the need of a country, and the considerations that go into this, as well as the way to photograph children in a way without explicitly exploiting them.[39]

Zarzycka also stresses that by using a single child across campaigns, potential donors might form an imaginary bond with the child, seeking to "change the world one child at a time," a slogan used by many aid organisations as well as UNICEF.[40] She discusses Save the Children and Plan UK's technique of child sponsorship and the colonial implication that comes with "saving" a child in a way that their surroundings apparently are unable to achieve. Zarzycka stresses the lengths that organisations like this go to in order to create a connection between the donor and the child they are sponsoring, including creating magazine articles

[37] Baughan, "'Every Citizen of Empire Implored to Save the Children!" ; Maren Olene Kloster, "Why it Hurts - Save the Children Norway and the Dilemmas of 'Going Global,'" *Forum for Development Studies* 46, no. 1 (2019).
[38] "100 Years for Children," Save the Children, accessed Jan 7, 2023, https://www.savethechildren.net/about-us/100-years-children.
[39] Marta Zarzycka, "Save the child: Photographed faces and affective transactions in NGO child sponsoring programs," *The Europe Journal of Women's Studies* 23, no. 1 (2016): 30.
[40] "Teachers change the world one child at a time," UNICEF, accessed Jan 7, 2023, https://www.unicefusa.org/stories/teachers-change-world-one-child-time/34882.

about donors who travel to meet "their" children, seeking to reinforce a link between sending money to a child periodically and a personal relationship.[41]

Zarzycka focusses mainly on the visual aspects of child sponsorship, looking at photographs on websites and magazines for donors, but also at the drawings and letters that children send to donors once or twice a year, giving donors "souvenirs" of a kind to create a more robust interpersonal connection.[42] The primary focus of the article being on visual material aligns with Zarzycka's research field being media, arts and culture, but the implications she makes go beyond her own field. By exploring the visuality of fundraising, both in general campaigns as well as in child sponsorship programmes, it is possible to explore topics of paternalism, power imbalances and the business model behind the pictures used in an advertisement. According to Chouliaraki's "post-humanitarian" discussion, this visual, mass-appeal humanitarianism has become increasingly popular in recent decades, which asks for little intensity from the donor but still gives them the feeling of being helpful.[43] The visuality that Zarzycka talks about accurately fits into this type of rhetoric, since it allows the donor to "help" through the means of letters, pictures and material objects without having to engage with crises in a direct manner.

Zarzycka is focussed on the current-day situation surrounding these organisations, which has left space for further exploration into the past. Zarzycka also follows Barnett's line of thinking when she expresses that photography is a good tool for NGOs because it makes potential donors aware of the failure of the world to protect these vulnerable populations, which goes against a belief in people's inherent goodness.[44] By linking visual media with pre-existing ideas about humanitarian organisations and how as well as why we choose to care about people we know very little about, Zarzycka is able to steer the conversation about aid organisations, donorship, and visual media in a new, interesting direction which in turn has inspired my research as well.

Conclusion

Within the research field surrounding humanitarianism, there are countless pieces of writing which seek to expand the public's knowledge about humanitarian organisations who became huge players on the global stage in the twentieth century. It is a complex subject, since it is

[41] Zarzycka, "Save the child," 36.
[42] *Id.*, 37.
[43] Lilie Chouliaraki, "Post-Humanitarianism," *International Journal of Cultural Studies* 13, no. 2 (2010): 108.
[44] Zarzycka, *"Save the child,"* 31.

filled with both compassionate people acting with the best intentions, while simultaneously containing massive pitfalls and inadequacies which can lead to people in need being no better off than they were before aid organisations showed up. This duplicity is apparent as soon as one looks at the titles of writing on the topic, exemplified by Mascarenhas' work containing the subtitle "Good Intentions on the Road to Help" and a book about the Italo-Ethiopian war and the Red Cross having the title *Between Bombs and Good Intentions*.[45] No one seems to want to discredit the fact that those active within this circle genuinely seek to help those in need, but they are equally unwilling to believe the rose-coloured stories that aid organisations tell about themselves. The overwhelming feeling that doing "something" is better than not doing anything at all haunts aid organisations, even if they are unsure what to do to actually make a situation better. Craig Calhoun questions why in recent years, we have started to believe that the natural state of the world is stable and positive, which thus means that when it is not so, we should intervene.[46] At the base of all the writing done about humanitarianism, both academic but also beyond academia, is the question by Calhoun as well as by many people; why do we feel like we need to help, what drives us to do so, and how do we go about it? Within this thesis, I hope to contribute a small piece to that puzzle.

[45] Rainer Baudendistel, *Between bombs and good intentions : the Red Cross and the Italo-Ethiopian War, 1935-1936 (*New York, NY [etc.]: Berghahn Books, 2006).
[46] Craig Calhoun, "The imperative to reduce suffering: Charity progress and emergencies in the field of humanitarian action," in *Humanitarianism in Question: Politics, Power, Ethics,* ed. Thomas Weiss and Michael Barnett (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2008), 85.

A Brief History of Humanitarianism

Humanitarianism, although it has existed on some level since the Enlightenment, exploded in the twentieth century.[47] Caring for the less fortunate and especially vulnerable within a community was previously primarily seen in Europe as the duty of one's community outside of exceptionally serious circumstances.[48] However, towards the twentieth century, this obligation started to expand across the globe and encompass those that the donor had never met and likely would never meet.[49] The "family of man" had not only a desire, but an obligation to help those they perceived to be in need, which allowed aid organisations to grow rapidly.

There are several important developments that need to be explored in order to understand the context in which decisions were made in the 1980s by humanitarian organisations. Although the 1980s may have seen an "earthquake in the humanitarian world" due to the Ethiopian famine, in many ways, Barnett is correct when he posits that most aid organisations are conservative in the way they are run.[50] Exploring their actions in a vacuum leaves out the decades of prior decisions by humanitarian organisations that are crucial to the way they operate. By expanding on this history, it is possible to contextualise decisions made by aid organisations and explain the wider cultural connections that influenced humanitarian choices. This chapter will give a short insight into the history of Save the Children, who are the case study for this thesis, as well as an overview of the historical debates surrounding child sponsorship. This chapter will conclude with a section on the social events important to the humanitarian world in the 1980s, in order to elucidate why certain choices were made. By discussing these key concepts for this thesis briefly, the topics included in later chapters are contextualised more clearly, and the larger themes involved in humanitarianism in the 1980s become apparent.

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[47] Nicole K. Dressler, ""Enimies to Mankind": Convict Servitude, Authority, and Humanitarianism in the British Atlantic World," *Early American Studies* 17, no. 3 (2019): 352.
[48] David Wright, "Familial Care of 'Idiot' Children in Victorian England," in *The Locus of Care: Families, Communities, Institutions and the Provision of Welfare since Antiquity*, ed. Peregrine Horden and Richard Smith (London: Routledge, 1998): 181.
[49] Keith David Watenpaugh, *Bread from Stones: the Middle East and the Making of Modern Humanitarianis*m, 1st ed. (Oakland, Calif: University of California Press, 2015), 5.
[50] Barnett, *Empire of Humanity*, 45.

The Save the Children Fund

Save the Children has continuously maintained a public image of impartiality and universality, and they have carefully cultivated this since their early years. However, their history is in reality more complex than they present to the world. The Save the Children Fund, later often shortened to simply Save the Children, was founded in 1919, in the aftermath of World War I.[51] Eglantyne Jebb is often credited as the founder of the organisation, but this is a well-established fact that has been questioned by some historians, among them Emily Baughan and Juliano Fiori, who represent the organisation's history differently. Dorothy Buxton, Jebb's sister, was one of the founders of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) and the Fight the Famine Council (FFC), both left-wing and feminist organisations.[52] She was also married to a Liberal politician especially focussed on educational reform for the poor.[53] Several activists in Britain after World War I were troubled by the blockade of German trade and the Treaty of Versailles, fearing that starvation of vulnerable citizens would follow.[54] However, due to the organisations Buxton was part of having socialist leaders and the Communist revolution in Russia turning a large part of the British public away from socialism, they feared that people would support their cause regarding German suffering.[55] A new organisation which held no political ties appeared to be the way forward, and Jebb was considered an ideal leader, since she did not have the overt political ties that her sister did. According to Baughan and Fiori, there is no evidence that Jebb was part of the formation of the organisation, but she is still almost exclusively credited as the founder of the fund.[56] This is not meant to suggest that Jebb was impassionate as a leader, however, as she gave a large part of her life to the organisation and wrote the "Declaration of the Rights of the Child," which she presented to the League of Nations.[57] Downplaying the socialist beginnings of the organisation, however, shows the historical

[51] Matthew Hilton, "Ken Loach and the Save the Children Film: Humanitarianism, Imperialism, and the Changing Role of Charity in Postwar Britain," *The Journal of Modern History* 87, no. 2 (2015): 363.
[52] Emily Baughan and Juliano Fiori, "Save the Children, the Humanitarian Project, and the Politics of Solidarity: Reviving Dorothy Buxton's Vision," *Disasters* 39, no. 2 (2015): 131.
[53] Sybil Oldfield, "Buxton [née Jebb], Dorothy Frances (1881–1963), humanitarian and social activist," in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Sep 23,2004, accessed Jun 26, 2023, https://www-oxforddnb-com.ezproxy.leidenuniv.nl/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-56643.
[54] Emily Mayhew, "Eglantyne Jebb and the War Against Children," *The Lancet* 393, no. 10184 (2019): 1928.
[55] Linda Mahood and Vic Satzewich. "The Save the Children Fund and the Russian Famine of 1921-23: Claims and Counter-Claims About Feeding "Bolshevik" Children," *Journal of Historical Sociology* 22, no. 1 (2009): 63.
[56] Baughan and Fiori, "Save the Children," 132.
[57] Brian Harrison, "Jebb, Eglantyne (1876–1928), philanthropist," in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Sep 23, 2004, accessed Mar 23, 2023, https://www-oxforddnb-com.ezproxy.leidenuniv.nl/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-34165.

image that Save the Children seeks to portray to the wider public. Crediting Jebb as the founder of Save the Children due to her lack of pre-existing political ties is in line with the organisation's ideology. They sought to help German children in a time in which this was a contentious move in a largely anti-German Britain, so they heavily insisted on the universal child, who was devoid of politics.[58] The apolitical narrative is one which Save the Children has held onto ever since, seeking to never engage directly with the political causes of poverty and hardship among children, only seeking to change its immediate effects.

Within Save the Children's history, there are several examples of the illusion of impartiality that aid organisations sought to represent. In their early days, Save the Children supported the imperial regime due to its supposed benefits to the children of empire.[59] During the period of decolonisation following the Second World War, Save the Children believed that supporting standing regimes would be most beneficial to creating stability for children. This led to them supporting the repression of an anti-colonial insurgency in Kenya, and the involuntary rounding up of school children to place them in residential schools to quell revolutionary ideas among them.[60] These instances show that impartiality and apoliticality was beneficial for their public image, but in actuality was nearly impossible to achieve. It is becoming increasingly recognised that the actions of NGOs will always be in the political sphere, since they impact education, the economy and potentially the ideology of any area they find themselves in, even if this is not a conscious decision.[61] The additional question is whether aid organisations should *want* to stay out of politics, when so much of their work is undone through the actions of corrupt governments and the continued inequality that is exacerbated by poor management in an area. Despite this, the language of universal children and apolitical action still reign in many aid organisations, and Save the Children has never consciously steered away from this narrative in the course of their existence.

Another key characteristic of aid organisations is their complicated relationship between universality and religious foundations. Charitable giving was in the past often linked to churches or places of worship, but throughout the twentieth century, non-religious organisations have increasingly taken over this position. This is not to say that faith-based organisations have become irrelevant in the field of humanitarianism—they still receive

[58] Bruno Cabanes, *The Great War and the Origins of Humanitarianism, 1918-1924* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 273.
[59] Baughan, "Every Citizen of Empire Implored to Save the Children!" 128.
[60] Emily Baughan, "Rehabilitating an Empire: Humanitarian Collusion with the Colonial State during the Kenyan Emergency, ca. 1954-1960," *Journal of British Studies* 59 (2020): 58.
[61] Prendergast, *Frontline Diplomacy*," 11.

government funding to provide aid—but the existence of seemingly non-religious organisations grew in this period.[62] However, while this deliberate disconnection from partisan religious groups was a choice that many organisations made in the early twentieth century, the religious undertones of organisations like Save the Children are important to explore when seeking to understand the way they represent themselves. The Save the Children Fund was from its infancy heavily involved with several different religious institutions, with Jebb reaching out to Pope Benedict XV in 1919 to ask for his support in convincing Catholics of the Save the Children Fund's mission.[63] The Pope was impressed by Jebb's work and offered to donate 100,000 lire to their cause, signalling to Catholics that this cause was worth supporting even during the economically challenging interwar years.

This pivotal moment in the early years of the organisation is not covered in the history Save the Children reports on their website, and shows the tension between religion and humanitarianism that continuously arises when looking at the history of aid organisations.[64] Jebb was not a Catholic, and in fact approached to Archbishop of Canterbury before she reached out to the Pope to gain his support, but she still felt that having a religious leader advocate for their cause was essential for its success.[65] The organisation does not speak of their early religious ties on their website, likely due to a decrease of the importance of religion in popular culture, but their celebration for their 90 year anniversary was still held in the St. Paul's Cathedral in London, with an Anglican service in their honour.[66] Save the Children combines a Christian rhetoric while still maintaining enough distance from any specific group in order to not lose potential donors. This decision again stresses their apolitical and non-partisan image, not being tied to either church or government, while still keeping ties with these establishments in order to garner their favour if they see the need for it. This kind of hybrid identity, apolitical and non-religious as well as politically involved and religious is not unique to Save the Children, but explains their actions later in the twentieth century.

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[62] Shawn Teresa Flanigan, *For the Love of God: NGOs and Religious Identity in a Violent World* (Sterling Col: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2009), 2.
[63] Patrick J. Houlihan, "Renovating Christian Charity: Global Catholicism, the Save the Children Fund, and Humanitarianism During The First World War," *Past & Present* 250, no. 1 (2021): 223.
[64] "100 years for children," Save the Children, accessed Mar 13, 2023, https://www.savethechildren.net/about-us/100-years-children.
[65] Clare Mulley, *The Woman Who Saved the Children: A Biography of Eglantyne Jebb, Founder of Save the Children* (Oxford: Oneworld Publications, 2009), 258.
[66] Jonathan Benthall, "Religion and Humanitarianism," in *The Routledge Companion to Humanitarian Action*, ed. Roger Mac Ginty and Jenny H Peterson (New York, NY: Routledge, 2015), 279.

Child Sponsorship Programmes

The history of child sponsorship, as with the history of individual aid organisations, has been questioned by people throughout time. Although Save the Children has been credited as being the first to set up individual child sponsorship by some sources, others state it started with Plan International, ChildFund or that it started in the US on a local level.[67] Hillary Kaell traces several likely origin stories to the child sponsorship programmes. She brings up American missionaries in Bombay who asked for money to house children and train them in the way of Christianity.[68] Equally likely is August Hermann Francke's orphan house, where he asked for donations from the general public in order to teach children about religion.[69] The actual origin of individual child sponsorship ultimately matters less however, than the general shape that it took in the twentieth century and the influence that certain developments in child sponsorship programmes had on Save the Children's advertising. By looking at the characteristics that shape child sponsorship it is possible to see the influence of its history as well as the impact of the wider political and social context on its appearance.

There are several different fundamental aspects of child sponsorship, all of which need to be explored in order to understand why these programmes have spread across several organisations and why they are popular and lucrative for the NGOs that employ them. One facet which has permeated humanitarian organisations is the individual story. Plan International's founder, John-Langdon Davies, supposedly found a child named José with the note pinned to his coat during the Spanish Civil War which read: "When Santander falls, I will be shot. I beg you to protect my child."[70] Bob Pierce, founder of World Vision, went to China in 1947 where he was presented with a child called "White Jade," who was said to have been kicked out of her house due to her Christian faith, leading him to promptly commit to sending $10 every month to help support her.[71] Whether these stories are true is debatable; World Vision currently mentions a Chinese girl on their website only in passing, and José is mentioned on some Plan International websites, but not on all of them. Although moving in

[67] Sara Fieldston, "Little Cold Warriors: Child sponsorship and international Affairs," *Diplomatic History* 38, no. 2 (2014): 241.
[68] Kaell, "The long history of child sponsorship," 48.
[69] Ibid.
[70] "About Plan International, " Plan International Ireland, accessed Mar 16, 2023, https://www.plan.ie/who-we-are/about-plan-international-ireland/.
[71] David P. King, "Heartbroken for God's World: The Story of Bob Pierce, Founder of World Vision and Samaritan's Purse," in *Religion in Philanthropic Organizations: Family, Friend, Foe?* ed. Thomas J. Davis (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2013), 71.

nature, perhaps these stories now seem too farfetched to a modern audience that has seen similar narratives countless times, leading these organisations to remove these specific details from modern retellings. The fact that many aid organisations share this common origin story in which they found a single child which moved them to help shows the power that providing a name and a face to your cause can have. The stories of White Jade and José are maybe too unrealistic to be believed by modern audiences, but their stories are replaced by the names and faces of children available for sponsorship. All these modern children wish to become doctors or teachers, and are invariably good students at school and love their siblings and parents, they are uplifting stories told to potential donors the way José and White Jade were used in the past. The hero in these story has shifted from being about the founders of aid organisations to being the individual donor helping a child, but the narrative of saving a deserving and innocent child has remained.

A key aspect of child sponsorship is the creation of a personal bond between the donor and the child they are sponsoring. This has been achieved through different means throughout the years, including the provision of annual photographs of the child, as well as letters, and within some organisations, even the ability to send physical gifts to the child.[72] Save the Children, in some of their earliest reporting in the 1920s already stresses the letters you will receive from the child, noting that if a child is too young someone will write letters for them.[73] The continued prominence of writing letters can be seen as being primarily based on the benefits that an aid organisation receives when a donor feels connected to "their child." Creating a connection to the cause leads to a steady stream of donations, something that aid organisations are always eager to achieve.[74] Childfund reported in 2013 that nearly 50,000 of their donors have been part of the child sponsorship programme for over 25 years, and 3000 more have been supporters for over 45 years.[75] Childfund is only one organisation which participates in this practice, but it can be assumed that the longevity of sponsorship is a reason why many organisations choose to use this practice to gather funding for their objectives. Furthermore, it seems to be effective: various aid organisations now receive the bulk of their

[72] Feeny et al. "Impacts of Child Sponsorship Communications," 5.
[73] "Concerning Adoption," Save the Children Fund, ca. 1919-1923, SCF/FR/8/7/2, Save the Children Fund Archive, University of Birmingham, Birmingham, United Kingdom (hereafter cited as SCF archive).
[74] Simon Mcgrath, "Giving Donors Good Reason to Give Again*," International Journal of Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Marketing* 2, no. 2 (1997): 130.
[75] Christine Ennulat, Jake Lyell, and Boas Opedun, *ChildFund International 2013 Annual Report: Learning and Growing*, (Richmond, VA: ChildFund International, 2014), 13, https://www.childfund.org/uploadedFiles/public_site/News/2013_Annual-Report_interactive.pdf.

annual donations from sponsorship. For instance, ActionAid's sponsorship donations amount to 58.7% and World Vision's programme brings in 54.8%.[76]

While personal connections have continuously been crucial for keeping donors engaged with the programme, in reality this relationship was often artificial and fraught with potential pitfalls for the child being sponsored as well as the Western audiences. It is also challenging for the organisation itself: it takes volunteers to translate letters, giving updates on the children means that the organisation needs to keep an eye on school performance, family life and the personal lives of sponsored children.[77] In comparison to other donation methods, it is an expensive practice to maintain. The personal connection between donor and donation recipient also suggests a level of equality, a "family of man" taking care of one another, but often inaccurate. Letters from children are at times censored, or simply ignored by the donor.[78] Donors can choose not to engage with the child, while children rarely have the same freedom to do so. Additionally, "difficult cases," youth who become pregnant, drop out of school or develop an addiction do not meet the innocent and feel-good picture that donors have when deciding to sponsor a child, putting pressure on aid workers and children to avoid this in order to prevent a loss of income.[79] While it was boldly titled "adoption" of a child in the first half of the twentieth century, in actuality the donor knew little about the lives of those they sponsor, and the sponsored child knew even less about their beneficiary. Despite this, attempts at forming these personal connections have persisted since the beginning of sponsorship programmes in the twentieth century, and this is unlikely to change in the future.

Another appealing aspect of child sponsorship, as opposed to other forms of donating to a cause, is the personal choice inherent to the practice. Allowing for choice is a way that humanitarian organisations allow the donor to feel a personal connection with the child from the start. On the Save the Children website, it is possible to filter children based on age and location. When you select these parameters, you are met with a list of faces and names, all potential children that are available for sponsorship. Their birth month and their dream job are listed, as well as some basic information on the country they are from and the actions that

[76] Jae-Eun Noh, "Human Rights-Based Child Sponsorship: A Case Study of ActionAid," *VOLUNTAS: International Journal of Voluntary and Nonprofit Organizations* 30, no. 6 (December 2019): 1422.
[77] Willem van Eekelen, "Revisiting Child Sponsorship Programmes," *Development in Practice* 23, no. 4 (2013): 475.
[78] *Id.*, 475.
[79] Ibid.

Save the Children take in their community.[80] On the websites of other organisations, such as Compassion International, the personal details are more extensive, explaining their hobbies, their education level, and the marital status of their parents.[81] The selection process is remarkably similar to shopping for clothing online.[82] On the Save the Children website there is a button at the bottom of every child's profile allowing you to "meet another child," next to the button allowing a person to sponsor this child. The availability of choice in child sponsorship has risen exponentially with the rise of the internet; while child sponsorship has always focussed on helping the individual child, print advertisements usually used one child to represent all the children up for sponsorship. An example is 'Lakshmi' in British advertisements of the 1980s, who wants to learn how to read or write but has no money to go to school, accompanied with a large picture of the child.[83] There were only limited ways to select an individual child in advertisements like this, and in the past, Save the Children portrayed themselves as somewhat uninterested in this practice. Brad Watson mentions that in the 1920s, Save the Children received a letter by a woman complaining that she realised that she was sponsoring a Jewish child, which she did not want to do.[84] The Save the Children staff was not receptive to her complaint, and stated that they sought sponsorship based on need, not on physical features, religion or gender.[85] The truth of this statement can be questioned, but this is the way they presented themselves. While religion is still not a part of the selection process for Save the Children, in which they differ from Christian-based organisations, gender and physical features are now a vital part of the selection process, since you can select a child from a line-up of faces. No studies have been conducted to this end so far, but it would be fascinating to explore whether skin colour, age or gender have an impact on their likelihood to be sponsored.[86] Additionally, there are children posted without photos, which could potentially impact their chances of being sponsored, although this has not been confirmed by aid organisations. This selection process has become a large part of the child sponsorship field. Placing the full control of which child gets sponsored and which child does not in the hands of the donor is a practice which started to gather steam in the late twentieth

[80] "Sponsor a Child," Save the Children, accessed Mar 21, 2023, https://support.savethechildren.org/site/SPageNavigator/sponsorship.html#!/.
[81] "Select a Child to Sponsor, "Compassion International, accessed Mar 21, 2023, https://www.compassion.com/sponsor_a_child/.
[8282] Li, "'Shopping for Change'," 461.
[83] "Share the Joys of Reading and Writing with a Child… Thousands of Miles Away," advertisement, *the Observer,* Nov 19, 1989, 49.
[84]Brad Watson, "The Origins of International Child Sponsorship," *Development in Practice* 25, no. 6 (2015): 874.
[85] Ibid.
[86]Li, "Shopping for Change," 466.

century, and while its outcomes can be questionable, this move represents the taste of the times.

Fundraising and politics in the 1980s

In the earlier decades of the twentieth century, advertising for humanitarian organisations was heavily reliant on local communities and newspapers. Towards the end of the century, however, there was a shift towards high-publicity fundraising. One of these trends is reflected in the rise of popular telethons for aid organisations. Although telethons have existed since the 1940s, they gained a new shape in the 1980s and started to gain a lot more attention.[87] In Britain, the 1980s marked a turning point for televised marketing for charities. Free advertisements in support of certain charities had been present when networks allowed it, but before 1989, paid slots for charities and their advertising had been forbidden.[88] After this ban had been lifted, it was possible for aid organisations to gain a stronger media presence than they had in the past, bringing their work to the attention of the public in a more direct way. This did not mean that advertising in print media disappeared, it still remained a very popular method, but its style started to change. Aid organisations also started to realise that there was a value to aligning themselves with public figures. Although there was pushback against "celebrity aid," it proved remarkably useful for gaining the public's interest for a cause, and in the late 1970s, this method of fundraising became increasingly popular, with print and televised advertisements with celebrities became commonplace in America and Europe.[89] This type of advertising was in the 1980s linked with high-profile tragedies like the Ethiopian famine, linking celebrity aid with telethons and a lot of media coverage.

In the 1980s, the Western world was shocked with images of famine that originated in Ethiopia. Haunting depictions of starving children were interspersed with the message that the only person who could possibly help was *you*, the audience unable to turn away from tragedy of this scale. The visuality of a disaster like this meant that the general public felt an acute need to help, and this feeling of pity was used by people in the entertainment industry to make a big statement about their humanitarian aspirations. This gave birth to a rise in benefit concerts which were joined by some of the period's most famous musicians, including U2,

[87] Paul K. Longmore, *Telethons: Spectacle, Disability, and the Business of Charity* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2016), 88.
[88] Paul Rutherford, *Endless Propaganda: The Advertising of Public Goods* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2000), 121.
[89] Rutherford, *Endless Propaganda*, 122.

Michael Jackson and Lionel Ritchie.[90] These concerts garnered a massive amount of attention as well as an immense amount of donations. Older aid organisations stressed that they were unhappy with the organisation of Live Aid, one of the most well-known benefit concerts, stating privately that it was diametrically opposed to what they believed aid should be, but collaboration between celebrities and aid organisations nonetheless continued.[91] The event garnered criticism from the wider public as well, since there were fears that the aid they provided would be channelled towards fuelling rebel movements instead of helping the vulnerable.[92] There was also pushback against the image that LiveAid painted of famine victims, which made famine apolitical and the victims helpless. War on Want, an organisation which sought to counteract the narrative often seen by media, had a pamphlet with a starving African child with the caption: "THIS MISERY IS MAN-MADE, SO WE CAN CHANGE IT!"[93] However, LiveAid raised £34 million in this period for famine victims through its concerts, which made it impossible to ignore their success.[94] Charities may not have approved of this method at first, but eventually followed the trends that had emerged in wider culture, turning to high-profile, high-visibility ways of providing aid to those who need it.

Events like this changed the image of what 'activism' could be. Where NGOs used to proclaim that aid workers were the ones who gave up their lives to save others, now a person could go to a concert or donate to a television show and help those across the world. Stephen Hopgood discusses this type of activism as "slacktivism," an activity requiring minimal engagement with the problems of the world.[95] Many concert goers at charity concerts primarily supported the artists: the cause was secondary to them.[96] While this type of 'activism' is at times discussed in a disparaging manner, the results for aid organisations is undeniable: they gain more members, receive more donations, and are able to connect themselves to younger generations, a task especially important for organisations like Save the Children which have existed since the early twentieth century. The focus for aid organisations has started to include those fleeting donors as well as seeking to maintain their long-term donors, who were attracted not to concerts but to programmes like sponsorship. These

[90] Peter Gill, *Famine and Foreigners: Ethiopia Since Live Aid* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 13.
[91] Matthias Kuhnert, "NGOs, Celebrity Humanitarianism and the Media," 269.
[92] Tanja R. Mueller, "'The Ethiopian Famine' Revisited: Band Aid and the Antipolitics of Celebrity Humanitarian Action," *Disasters* 37, no. 1 (2013): 63.
[93] Kuhnert, "NGOs, Celebrity Humanitarianism and the Media," 271.
[94] *Id*., 273.
[95] Hopgood, *The Endtimes of Human Rights*, 106.
[96] W.M. Schmidli, "Rockin' to free the world? Amnesty International's benefit concert tours, 1986-88," *Diplomatic History* 45, no. 4 (2021): 702.

celebrity events had an effect on the manner in which organisations like Save the Children advertised to their potential donors, and while sponsorship was not low-commitment the way that the concerts were, they had the same type of glamour attached to it, with photos and letters confirming one's goodness and provided the donor with physical mementos, somewhat similar to getting CDs from a concert you have attended.

Conclusion

By looking at the history of Save the Children as an organisation, the evolution of the child sponsorship programme and the manner in which certain humanitarian trends in the 1980s emerged, it is possible to see the way that advertising was structured in this period, and why this was done. The 1980s has been described in the humanitarian field in various different ways, experiencing events which caused organisations to change their ways, being seen as the era of "celebrity aid" and being the rise of "philanthrocapitalism," with the Western world becoming more and more entranced with capitalist ideas being combined with humanitarian efforts.[97] In many ways, this period seems like a turning point for aid organisations, who had to get more comfortable with "complex emergencies" and negotiate an ever-changing political sphere. This brief overview of main developments of both Save the Children as an organisation and the practices of the humanitarian field as a whole allows for a more thorough understanding of the advertisements and public image that Save the children chose to present in the 1980s. By looking at humanitarianism and child sponsorship as a field not in a vacuum, but as having a long and often complicated past, it is possible to see where changes were influenced by wider society.

[97] Li, "Shopping for Change?," 457.

Domination and Selectivity

The criticism that humanitarianism contains the spectre of colonialism and inherent power imbalances has been made many times in the past by academics and popular publications alike. Major aid organisations, including Save the Children and Oxfam, have in recent history faced widespread backlash for the fact that leading figures in their organisations used their position of authority to cover up sexual assault of both those they should help and those below them in the organisation's structure.[98] In 2022, the British government, inspired by the Black Lives Matter protests, published a scathing report of racism within the aid sector, something it considered to be a legacy of colonial attitudes.[99] The fact that colonialism, power abuses and humanitarianism have been closely intertwined in multiple historic instances raises a question about the power structure created by aid organisations, and where those in need of help fit in relation to the forces inherent to international aid.

Accusations that NGOs are part of a vastly unequal power structure is far from new. According to Barnett, domination has always been one of the major forces involved in humanitarian aid, since taking control of a situation in order to better someone's living condition still means taking power away from a person.[100] While it could be said that there is always an option to reject the offer of aid, it is impossible to say whether this choice is a feasible one for those in a crisis.[101] The 'free choice' on the end of recipients of aid is a popular discussion point in capitalist societies, but proves to be negligible in practice, while free choice on the end of the donor is more important than it has ever been before. The amount of aid organisations continues to rise, and the causes that people feel like they can be involved in does as well. To see the influence of domination and unequal power structures within child sponsorship, different aspects of these programmes should be explored. First, I will discuss the language used to describe child sponsorship, and the shift that it underwent in order to fit in with public opinion and how it created a sense of hierarchy between donor and donation recipient. The second section will discuss the way that the selection process

[98] Rebecca Scurlock, Nives Dolsak, and Aseem Prakash, "Recovering from Scandals: Twitter Coverage of Oxfam and Save the Children Scandals," *VOLUNTAS: International Journal of Voluntary and Nonprofit Organizations* 31, no. 1 (2020): 94.
[99] International Development Committee, *Racism in the aid sector*, HC 150 § (London: House of Commons, 2022), 6, accessed April 19, 2023, https://committees.parliament.uk/publications/22698/documents/166821/default/.
[100] Barnett, *Empire of Humanity*, 9.
[101] Mascarenhas, *New Humanitarianism and the Crisis of Charity*, 96.

functioned, and to follow up on that the focus on the potential of children will be analysed. These different facets of child sponsorship show that domination has continuously been a key element of child sponsorship in marketing despite its portraying the process as personal and based on mutual respect.

"These children can be adopted"

Save the Children has participated in child sponsorship since their beginnings, but it was not always described in those terms, which led to the creation of a certain expectation regarding the division of power in a sponsorship relationship. In the early years, different aid organisations discussed sponsorship of a child in terms of "adoption," implying a very deep personal connection with a child.[102] Save the Children continued with this type of terminology until the early 1970s. This was eventually phased out due to the feeling by many aid organisations that it created an unfair expectation of the relationship between the donor and the person receiving their donation, although the term is still sometimes used by smaller organisations.[103] Adoption seemed to imply a deeper, more formal relationship with the child that sponsors supported than what in reality was a relatively minor facet of their lives. However, the emphasis on a familial relationship with children in need did not end with the term adoption, the idea of familial ties existed in a lot of advertising in the 1930s until the 1950s by Save the Children. One advertisement asked if you will be "a godmother or a godfather to some needy child."[104] Another states that Nora Darzina is thrilled with the "underwear and nice shoes" that her Canadian "uncle" has provided for her.[105] This way of thinking is accurately summed up in one advertisement in the early days of Save the Children, where the headline reads: "Onto *Us* A Child is Born" (emphasis in original).[106] In these advertisements, Save the Children stressed the universality of children, suggesting that if one child is struggling, we should approach this matter as if it were a child in our own family rather than a child we have no connection with. This manner of advertising appealed to a sense of obligation to the family of humanity and the ultimate idea that by sponsoring a child, the donor was able to foster a relationship with them, even if this was highly unlikely in a period in which Europe was war-torn and largely inaccessible. A donor is through this type of

[102] Kari B. Henquinet, "Missionary, Citizen, and Consumer: Evangelical American Child Sponsorship and Humanitarian Marketing in the 1950s and 1960s," *Economic Anthropology* 10, no. 1 (2023): 9.
[103] *Save the Children Sponsorship Handbook 1972-1973*, May 15, 1973, SCF/OP/1/3/7, SCF Archive, 45.
[104] "Children Calling You," *the Save the Children Pictorial*, no. 28, Nov 1937, SCF/P/2/PIC/2/13, SCF Archive.
[105] *News Bulletin Spring 1946*, Apr 29, 1946, SCF/FR/13/1, SCF Archive.
[106] "Onto Us A Child is Born," *the Save the Children Pictorial*, no. 28, Nov 1937, SCF/P/2/PIC, SCF Archive.

language able to imagine they play an important role in the life of a child, shifting the power dynamic from being transactional to being familial.

While the specific terminology of adoption and family relations was abandoned later in the twentieth century, the sentiment that it created was not. In 1964, Save the Children ran an advertising campaign in many major British newspapers which told the story of Dervla Murphey, who according to the headline "adopted 1000 children…" when she went to India with the "Freedom from Hunger Campaign" in the 1960s.[107] In the 1970s, Save the Children ran a campaign with a picture of a malnourished child and asked the reader "think what it would be like it this were your child." In advertising surrounding children in need, the universality of their suffering, as well as the apolitical nature of the belief that children should be well taken care of, was continuously brought up. If the world should be perceived as one large family, as aid organisations sought to convey with advertising like this, the fact that there were children who were suffering should impact us the way that the suffering of our immediate family would have. By stressing traditional familial ties, child sponsorship became more personal, due to its connection to nuclear family. It also became hierarchical, since only the donor got to choose whether this relationship existed.

Creating a sense of connection between the donor and the cause they are funding by appealing to familial relationships was a beneficial fundraising technique, especially if you wanted the donor to feel a kind of relationship with the child they were sponsoring. However, certain terms used by Save the Children implied a feeling that through sponsorship, donors were not only able to add to a child's family, but in fact was able to replace the traditional figures of support in the lives of the sponsored children . The paternalism inherent in humanitarianism despite its best intentions, as Barnett describes it, is directly visible when looking at the relationship cultivated between the donors and the children; one which was thought to fill a hole in the lives of the child which could not be fixed by their parents or their community. In child sponsorship, the domination of the donor over the child they are sponsoring is directly visible, and its disruption of traditional family structures is a sign of both its intimate nature and its paternalist belief that this would be for the benefit of the child.

The parent of a child played an interesting role in the sponsorship scheme in the twentieth century: they were the child's guardian, but would continuously be side-lined in the decision on what would best benefit their child, since Save the Children's administrators

[107] "She Adopted 1000 Children…" advertisement 1964, SCF/FR/13/3, SCF Archive.

ultimately selected where the money from the donor should be spent in relation to the child. Parents could make requests, but in most cases were not involved in the decision-making process.[108] Additionally, Save the Children made it clear that they would sponsor a child only when a parent was unable to provide for them themselves, stating that: "Care must be taken not only to choose the child in need of help but to ensure that the parents or guardian cannot otherwise supply this help themselves," choosing families where this type of power imbalance was most likely to be accepted in the best interest of the child.[109] In multiple advertisements between the 1930s and the 1980s, the parents of sponsored children came up only as near ghostlike figures – present, but unable to take care of their child "properly." They were only there to write an almost reverent thank-you letter in a newsletter from the 1930s and looked on as their child starved in the advertisement in the 1970s.[110] While no advertisement expressed themselves negatively about the parents of the children up for sponsorship, they were portrayed with a level of passivity in many advertisements. This neglects the lengths that many parents went to in order to provide for their children. In testimonials describing the success of former sponsored children, the parents did all they could to keep their kids in school, but were unable to continue paying for costs like tuition and uniforms or books, something that is then frequently followed with a "thanks to S.C.F sponsorship…" and a tale of ultimate academic success.[111] This allowed the donor to feel as if they played a crucial part in the lives of the children they sponsor, which was beneficial for Save the Children who sought to retain sponsors for as long as they were able to do so, but it also isolated the child from their surroundings, both narratively and at times in reality.[112] The child was not being sufficiently provided for by their local community according to Save the Children, needing Western donors to step in to help. This stance can lead to a new sense of hierarchy within families, but also in communities and internationally, looking at aid organisations and their donors stepping into the role as generous "godparent."

Although this may not be entirely intentional, in the stories told by Save the Children, family ties were frequently secondary to the crucial role that the sponsor played in the life of a child, a sentiment which might not have been shared by the family themselves or indeed the child in question. Although earlier discussions of adoptions and so-called uncles was not

[108] *Save the Children Sponsorship Handbook 1972-1973,* SCF Archive, 15.
[109] *Id.,* 14.
[110] "A Child's Thanks," *The Save the Children Pictorial* no. 24, 1937, SCF/P/2/PIC, SCF Archive.
[111] "Memorandum: Stories of Ex Sponsored Children," Jul 30, 1991, SCF/FR/10/5/CHI/6, SCF Archive, 3.
[112] Noh, "Human Rights-Based Child Sponsorship," 1422.

prevalent in the 1980s, the implication still remained. Save the Children, as their name suggests, has only ever had an interest in helping children, but by stressing that no one else can help outside of donors from foreign nations, they take agency from those actually close to the child. By stressing the role of the donor and neglecting the importance of traditional support systems like families and local communities, Save the Children unintentionally creates a narrative in which the child is alone and abandoned, perhaps explaining why adoption felt like such a fitting term for a long time. The adoption narrative, with children becoming part of the family structure of the donor, as opposed to their own community, shows that Save the Children sought to provide the donor with power over the child, although largely symbolic, that the child might not have agreed with. People in families ostensibly have obligations towards each other, and this sense of commitment was very beneficial for Save the Children, but neglected to recognise the dominance it displayed over local communities through this language, and the fact that a child had little choice in joining this "family."

Selecting a Sponsored Child

One highly controversial part of child sponsorship programmes has continuously been the selectivity of the project. It is possible that in a region where hundreds of children could have benefited from the added financial support of a sponsor, only a handful of children were selected to receive this money. Save the Children was never fully transparent about how they selected children for sponsorship, only stressing the fact that it supported those who were most in need. This likely has to do with the fact that in most reports throughout the twentieth century, there were no strict guidelines about how the selection process was supposed to work, with a large amount of freedom being awarded to the administrators of Save the Children in a country. However, it is apparent that 'need' was not the only metric that was used by administrators to select children, and although outwardly they did not seek to show any favouritism towards certain children within communities, in their internal communications some interesting trends emerged.

In the early twentieth century, child sponsorship advertising was a lot less detailed than it became towards the end of the century. In this period, photographs of children were extremely important, but little other information was usually provided, with an exception of listing their nationality, as seen in Fig. 1.[113] However, this did not prevent potential sponsors from seeking out certain types of children. In an advertisement from 1946, a reader is

[113] Noh, "Human Rights-Based Child Sponsorship,"1422.

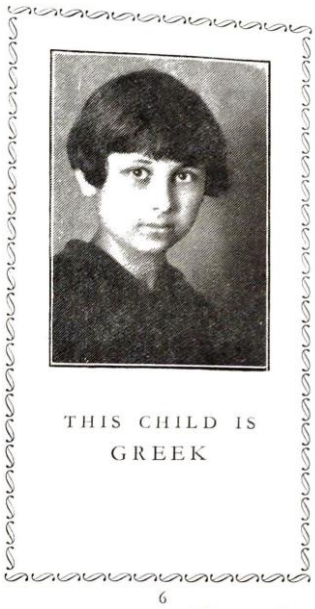

Figure 1: Example of a sponsorship advertisement prior to the second World War by Save the Children[114]

encouraged to adopt a child, and offered the choice between "British or Foreign" children.[115] Although Watson states that Save the Children at first rebuffed any attempts of selecting a child based on their religion, gender or national identity, internal documents do provide some evidence to the contrary.[116] During the second World War, Save the Children was still running their sponsorship campaign in areas it could access. In the annual report of Save the Children regarding 1943-1944, they discussed the "photo-card sponsorship scheme," a form of child sponsorship. In this report, there appeared to be evidence that sponsors did have a hand in selecting who they sponsored. The report mentioned that British sponsors had no problem with donating to generally impoverished children, but American donors preferred to sponsor a child who was directly impacted by the war. Save the Children did not only accommodate this, they even allowed the donor to specifically select children who were victims of bombing raids.[117] These examples illustrate that although some articles attribute the option to select children to modern developments like websites and profiles that make sponsoring a child similar to an online shopping process, the actual desire for individual choice on the part of the donor has existed within Save the Children since its foundational

[114] "Children of Many Lands*," The Save the Children Fund Pictorial,* summer 1931, SCF/P/2/PIC, SCF Archive.
[115] "One of our 'adopted' children," *The Save the Children Fund Pictorial*, Jun 27, 1946, SCF/FR/13/1, SCF Archive, 5.
[116] Watson, "The origins of international child sponsorship," 874.
[117] *The Twenty-fifth Annual Report of the Save the Children Fund,* 1943-1944, SCF/FR/13/1, SCF Archive, 14-15.

years.[118] This allowance for personal choice may have attract donors, especially those who were attracted to individualism and personalisation, but it could be detrimental to the children being sponsored. British donors in the second World War being granted the choice to adopt "British" or "Foreign" children directly rejected the apolitical and universal nature that Save the Children chose to project, and the fact that some of the organisation's earliest advertising as seen in Fig. 1 already emphasised the nationality of a child supports this. By allowing free choice for their donors, Save the Children implicitly supported already existing biases as well as a form of power imbalance between the donor's country and the country of those they sponsor. Selectivity allowed for domination, since it created a hierarchy of those who were "worthy," like bombing victims, and those who were "unworthy" and thus not likely to receive support. By allowing donors the chance to select who they feel deserves their support, Save the Children participated in the perpetuation of a power structure in which the rich, in this case the donor, could decide who should receive help and who should not.

In the 1970s sponsorship handbook provided to Save the Children employees, this selectivity was once again reiterated, not on the part of the donor this time but instead looking at which children were provided an opportunity for sponsorship in the first place. While the discretion of the employee was stressed, some interesting aspects emerged which contradicted their outward reporting. Firstly, they stated immediately that they are unable to sponsor the "completely destitute," as they were unable to assure that these children would benefit from the scheme, and that the chance was slim that these children would be able to achieve long-term progress in their lives.[119] The sentiment that those most in need of help would receive it through this practice advocated by aid organisations needed to be nuanced to include the condition that the need could not be extensive enough to interfere with the potential for future success of the child.

There was also discussion of the sponsorship of disabled children, who were not excluded from sponsorship programmes but needed to meet a specific set of criteria, again stressing the selection process and those in control of it having a lot of power over the child. They emphasised various different conditions, such as children with leprosy, physically disabled children and children who attend schools for the blind, and how these children could be supported by the scheme. As with the "destitute" children, a condition that is placed on the potential sponsorship of disabled children was the opportunity for progress, they did not wish

[118] Li, "'Shopping for Change'," 465
[119] *Save the Children Sponsorship Handbook 1972-1973*, SCF Archive, 5.

to simply maintain the life of a child within a healthcare institution, but would consider a disabled child if sponsorship could lead to them leading a "reasonable adult life."[120] What constitutes "reasonable" was not explained, although it appeared to entail some semblance of independence and self-sufficiency, tapping into the idea of "helping people help themselves" that became popular among humanitarian organisations in the 1970s and progressed into the 1980s. Another important aspect of the acceptance of a child with a disability in the sponsorship programme was an ability to communicate with their sponsor, and if they were unable to do so, a parent or sibling should write letters on their behalf.[121] Accepting children who could not properly communicate was listed as "exceptional," showing that these children were not preferred by Save the Children administrators, likely due to the extra work that went into sponsorships of this kind.[122] It is worth noting that this was not the image that Save the Children sought to project, since they did create advertisements specifically promoting the sponsorship of disabled children in their newsletters in the 1980s, who would be given an opportunity to "make most of their lives" due to sponsors.[123] While this is a handbook for employees in the 1970s, disabled children were still not preferred in the 1980s either. A lot of advertising for child sponsorship focussed on the positive outcome that sponsorship could create, with children being socially and financially uplifted through monthly donations. If a child had few prospects for being able to live independently due to a disability, this same level of satisfaction would not occur, since the idea of "progress" was linked to independence and economic success in many of these advertisements. While children were seen in a lot of humanitarian advertisements as helpless and needy, donors still expected progress to occur once they started supporting a child. The idea of withholding support due to the expectations by a donor and their ability to feel useful contradicts the idea of universality and helping those most in need, and again places control of those deserving support in the hands of employees of aid organisations and their supporters.

Save the Children had been aware of the potentially controversial nature of sponsorship for quite some time, as an internal report about sponsorship in Asia implied when discussing the "appropriateness" of continuing with sponsorship when the practice was selective and divisive.[124] The report acknowledged that by its very nature, sponsorship had to

[120] S*ave the Children Sponsorship Handbook 1972-1973,* SCF Archive, 13.
[121] *Id.,* 26.
[122] Ibid.
[123] "I Need Your Help," *the World's Children,* 1986, SCF/P/2/WOR/63, SCF Archive.
[124] "The Role of Sponsorship in Overseas Work," *Review of Sponsorship in Overseas Programmes,* Jan 5, 1988, SCF/FR/10/5/CHI/3, SCF Archive.

be selective, but that this was justified if it supports "exceptionally disadvantaged children."[125] However, it is worth noting that who these disadvantaged children were was mostly decided by those outside of their community. In the early twentieth century, donors themselves could select who they found most worthy of their donations, for instance by perceiving children in bombed areas as more in need than those living in poverty. This selectivity did not disappear in more recent decades, and disability and poverty levels all became important factors in deciding whether a child was suitable for the sponsorship programme. High mobility, homelessness or a likelihood of dropping out of school were important considerations for child sponsorship, again potentially excluding the children who would need the most support.[126] All of this evidence proves that children were often not chosen based on their actual needs, but more on how likely they were to be 'sold' to the donor, as the handbook describes the donor-donation recipient relationship.[127] While Save the Children and organisations like them sought to show the relationship between the recipients of sponsorship, their organisation and the donors as a relationship with equal standing, looking at internal documentation proves that this is not accurate and fails to acknowledge an inequality not only in opportunities provided to the sponsored, but also in the information provided from the organisation towards the donors. In the end, the donors and organisations are in control of those who receive help, and those who do not. This power structure harkens back to Barnett's claim that even well-intentioned domination still contributes to inequality, since children had no say in whether they are selected for the programme.

A child with 'potential'

One other aspect of selecting the children that were given the opportunity to be sponsored was their so-called potential. This was heavily intertwined with why disabled children were less likely to be selected, due to the chance that they would not be able to enact their potential, or why destitute children or those without housing were excluded as well. As with "reasonable" adulthood, "potential" is a term which was never fully defined, but seemed to imply a level of improvement in their lives. However non-descript the term may be, its implications could be found in almost all advertising and reporting linked to child sponsorship. The children used as examples for sponsorship candidates were all invariably optimistic, charming and intelligent, performing excellently at school due to the opportunities

[125] "The Role of Sponsorship in Overseas Work," *Review of Sponsorship in Overseas Programmes*, Jan 5, 1988, SCF/FR/10/5/CHI/3, SCF Archive.
[126] Noh, "Human Rights-Based Child Sponsorship," 1423.
[127] *Save the Children Sponsorship Handbook 1972-1973*, SCF Archive, 19.

awarded to them by their Save the Children sponsor.[128] This potential that sponsored children possessed seemingly placed them ahead of the rest of their peers, and allowed them the chance to escape poverty when others around them were not able to.

Most signs point towards the potential which was frequently discussed in child sponsorship advertisements as being primarily focussed on academic success, which would hopefully then be followed by economic success once the child became an adult. The idea that sponsorship could help in this process was reasonable, since evidence does show that ex-sponsored children were more likely than others in their area to eventually find white-collar, stable employment.[129] In a reflection on child sponsorship in Lesotho, there were a number of ex-sponsored children who became teachers and went on to do administrative work. According to those interviewed for the review, the Save the Children sponsorship programme allowed children to continue in school for longer, and at times even being able to attend a college or an university once they had completed their secondary education.[130] Child sponsorship helped in Lesotho with keeping children in school which would have dropped out eventually, since although half of the interviewed students told researchers they had been excluded from school due to a lack of ability to pay for the school fees, only a quarter of Save the Children sponsored children suggested this was the case.[131] Most children who were sponsored by Save the Children listed jobs in the medical field as their final goal and were generally optimistic about their future, which is a type of empowerment which is important to recognise.

Potential in this study surrounding Lesotho seemed to have mostly been aimed at the opportunity to gain an academic education and a high-paying job in the future, mirroring Western ideas of success. One respondent to the survey in Lesotho argued that Save the Children should support students at vocational schools in the future as well as traditional schools, since "many children have ability in other areas, and not just academic," but there is little evidence that this suggestion was ever seriously considered.[132] This focus on formal education suggests a very standardised idea of what would lead to a good career. There were noteworthy cases where children from humble backgrounds became very successful in their jobs, but this was certainly not the norm. Potential being linked to academic success is not

[128] "Mohammed's Smile Says it All…" *the World's Children,* 1988, SCF/P/2/WOR/65, SCF Archive.
[129] Wydick, Glewwe, and Rutledge. "Does International Child Sponsorship Work?" 394.
[130] "Thuto Ke Lefa" *An evaluation of a Save the Children Child Sponsorship Programme, 1961-2001,* SCF/OP/6/LES/27/32, SCF Archive, 14.
[131] "Thuto Ke Lefa," SCF Archive, 60.
[132] *Id.,* 17.

illogical on its own, but who decides what constitutes success does merit some more consideration. As the respondent stated, children who are taught a vocation can be very successful within their field without advancing their economic status majorly. The idea of success being measured in economic and academic progress is not entirely unfounded, but suggests implicitly that to achieve their potential and gain the extra financial support sponsorship could provide, a child needed to strive for a Western model for their lives, neglecting local traditions and beliefs.

The potential of children is linked in many advertisements with their motivation and passion. Multiple advertisements referred to the lengths that children would go through to go to school, with one article in a newspaper published by Save the Children, *the World's Children* describing that one sponsored child walked 12 miles a day to get to school.[133] Another advertisement described that while children in Britain looked forward to the end of term, African schoolchildren dreaded it due to the fact that they might not be able to return once the new school year starts due to a lack of money to pay the fees, something described as a "tragic waste of ability."[134] A newspaper advertisement described the desperation of a child to learn how to read and write, and the loss that occurred when there was no opportunity for her to do so.[135] That is not to say that these stories were inaccurate: many children who would be considered for sponsorship did want to continue with their education in order to find more stable employment than their parents were able to. However, there were other factors that could prevent a child from completing their education. The study regarding Lesotho listed pregnancy, elopement, marriage, or simple relocation of the family to an area where Save the Children is not operational as some of the most important reasons for non-completion of education.[136] However, it could also simply come down to a lack of job opportunities in their region, leading to a lack of economic growth. In the 1980s, success would not be measured by a child's contentment with their life, which admittedly would be hard to qualify in a report, but instead by what kind of income they could be expected to have once they had grown up, and these life events that disrupted those plans were seen as disturbances rather than alternative paths for a child into adulthood. This idea of success and what the types of children were that were able to reach their full potential is nearly entirely enforced by aid

[133] "Open up a new Future," *the World's Children,* 1980, SCF/P/2/WOR/57, SCF Archive, 18.
[134] "End of Term," *the World's Children,* Dec 1982, SCF/P/2/WOR/59, 57, SCF Archive.
[135] "Share the Joys of Reading and Writing with a Child… Thousands of Miles Away," *the Observer,* Nov 19, 1989, 49.
[136] "Thuto Ke Lefa," SCF Archive , 46.

organisations and the people who sponsor, and little attention is paid to what children saw as success. Sponsored children reportedly wanted to become doctors and teachers, but one child said something that elucidated the wider culture in which they were living. When asked what their future job would be, they said they would likely become a taxi driver or farmer, popular "unskilled" jobs in Lesotho, because "there is no work in Lesotho other than this."[137] Save the Children and their donors believed that they had the power required to change the lives of children to project an image of Western success onto them, but as Save the Children's own report suggests, this hope is likely to fall short for many children when the larger society around them still experiences crippling poverty.

Financial and academic potential and its ability to change the lives of children in Save the Children's projects has to be recognised as influential regarding the future happiness of a child, since financial stability is hugely important for adult life. However, the Western rhetoric of success projected onto children in the 1980s could cause some problematic messaging in advertising. One advertisement in this period for child sponsorship stated that "without 18p a day from you, her future isn't worth a penny."[138] This advertisement was not unique in its messaging, but the idea behind a headline like this was reflective of the power structure that enforced beliefs like this. In most cases, only a handful of children within a region were actually given a sponsor, most children were not. Were their futures doomed from the start in that case? As mentioned previously, the children most in need were not necessarily the ones who received a sponsorship, so their future was apparently "not worth a penny" despite all their other life circumstances. While sponsorship allowed children to stay in school for longer and potentially reach tertiary education allowing them to gain higher levels of employment, there were always children who were left out of this chance to gain upwards mobility. As the study surrounding sponsorship in Asia mentioned, the very nature of sponsorship is selective, but when pairing this with the reality that most children in an area would not be sponsored, it seems like a lot more care should have been placed into what constitutes "potential," and why certain children's futures were deemed worth more than those of the others around them.

[137] "Thuto Ke Lefa," SCF Archive , 62.
[138] "Without 18p A Day from You, Her Future isn't Worth a Penny," *the World's Children* 1980, SCF/P/WOR/57, SCF Archive.

Conclusion

The selectivity and the choice of words in the advertising used to promote child sponsorship all expressed a form of domination reminiscent of Barnett's claims about the relationship between humanitarianism and the people who benefited from it. By covertly seeking to tighten the relationship between the sponsor and the sponsored, the traditional familial structure was suggested as being insufficient in supporting a child. The selectivity of sponsorship programmes also reinforced power hierarchies that favour the opinion of the NGO over that of the local community, since who had the most immediate needs is highly subjective, especially when combined with the second condition for sponsorship being the potential of a child. There is enough evidence to suggest that sponsorship is capable of improving the lives of the children involved in these programmes, showing higher levels of stable employment and education compared to children in a similar situation without sponsor. The emancipatory nature of these programmes can thus not be understated for those involved with the programme. However, their relatively limited reach in the late twentieth century, with only a few children being sponsored, meant that a lot of children were left behind in processes like this. The emphasis on individuality as well as market potential when it came to the children who were given the chance to be sponsored is a good representation of the feelings surrounding international aid at this time, with systematic problems being side-lined for a focus on the good that an individual could do. "Without 18p A Day from You, Her Future isn't Worth a Penny" as a title did not seek to question why this kind of system was possible and ethical, it only stressed how minimal the loss is to the donor and the massive difference it could make to the child receiving the money. The futures of the many other children, who did not receive this symbolic 18p, was never considered to be a topic of note.

Individualism and Letter Writing

Letter-writing between sponsors and recipients has always been a unique aspect of child sponsorship, and in the 1980s this practice was still heavily promoted as a benefit of child sponsorship. Two-way communication moves beyond the faceless provider and receiver of money dichotomy that exists in other aid programmes. This practice was a common marketing strategy throughout its existence, although the way it has been run since the early twentieth century has changed. While different aid organisations have had a variety of approaches to sponsorship throughout the years, either focussing on individuals solely or allowing people to sponsor school classes or families, all of them offered the opportunity of writing letters to aid recipients. This implies that the writing of letters back and forth played a large role in the relationship between the donor and the child who received the donations, but research in the 1980s argued this was not entirely accurate. The illusion of personal connection between these two groups was being questioned in this period, as well as their ability to communicate in an equal way. This public questioning mirrored private concerns by Save the Children surrounding child sponsorship programmes, making it a practice which was on unstable footing in the 1980s.

Letter writing was a practice which was valued highly within aid organisations, but it was also expensive and included a lot more administrative work than other forms of donating.[139] However, the benefits surpassed the inconvenience for many organisations.[140] By looking at letter writing in sponsorship programmes in this period, it is possible to see why seemingly inefficient projects like this continued to exist, and why letter writing was seen by Save the Children and others as important for maintaining a donor base increasingly involved in a neoliberal world where the individual connection was valued above that of a community. Letter writing was seen as a powerful way for creating a feeling of connection between donor and aid recipient, as well as a strong marketing strategy for humanitarian organisations. Due to this fact, the unequal power balance was seemingly lessened for a general audience, even if it was as a practice a method to keep donors coming back to one organisation, echoing brand loyalty in for-profit organisations. In this chapter, I will first look at the letter imagery used by Save the Children to advertise their work, in order to explore how it made this practice

[139] *Save the Children Sponsorship Handbook 1972-1973*, SCF Archive, 27.
[140] Feeny et al., "Impacts of Child Sponsorship Communications," 1.

appealing to the general public. I will subsequently explore criticism levelled against letter writing as a practice, showing that public in the 1980s was not solely positive about letter-writing as a marketing tool. This reveals that practices in aid marketing that worked in the past were increasingly being questioned towards the end of the twentieth century. Finally, I will look at the internal debates within Save the Children which proved that it was not a necessary practice to keep donors coming back to their organisation, raising questions regarding its continuing existence. I will argue that rather than aiming to create genuine connections between donor and the child they sponsor, letter writing was a good avenue for Save the Children to market their work and to keep a level of individualism to their organisation in a rapidly professionalising humanitarian field.

Advertising Letters

The fact that NGOs like Save the Children saw writing letters as the main appeal of sponsorship programmes is reflected in several of their advertising campaigns in the 1980s, which prominently featured letters as part of the advertisements. The authenticity of the letters used in these advertising campaigns is debatable, but whether they were written by actual sponsored children or if they were written by advertising staff at Save the Children is not relevant to their intended goal. They were meant to convey a type of feeling in the person who encountered them in a newspaper or flyer; their origin did not matter if they were able to convince the audience that this is the type of letter they could receive if they joined the sponsorship programme. These letters all contain certain characteristics, which allow for an insight into the aspects that Save the Children thought their potential donors might value, including unwavering gratefulness and the personal benefit donors could expect from participating.

Fig. 1 shows an advertisement in a Save the Children pamphlet, which captures the expectation of gratitude and the relationship that could be created through writing letters to a sponsored child. This advertisement contained multiple sections from letters supposedly sent by children who received a sponsorship, and at the bottom showed a letter by the sponsors themselves, who wrote of their gratitude at being able to help a child succeed, who is now a "strapping young man of 18." The manner in which this advertisement was structured first draws the eyes to the top letters, which discussed the fact that children were able to flourish in school due to their donor and proclaim the good that this friendship is doing for the child. The advertisement ends with the donors' letter indirectly assuring the reader that it is not alone who benefited from an arrangement like this. In this advertisement, child sponsorship is

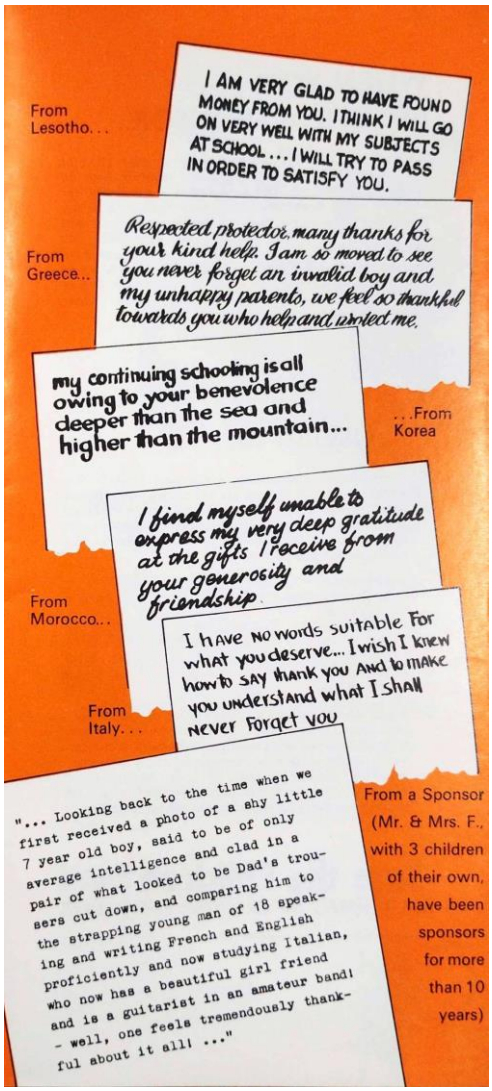

Figure 1: Pamphlet titled "sponsorship" by Save the Children.[141]

depicted as a special type of programme suitable for those with "benevolence deeper than the sea and higher than the mountain," as the letter from a Korean child states. The focus in this advertisement is on the special nature of the donor, not the children, who remain grateful but without defining characteristics.

By including both letters from sponsors and from aid recipients, a sense of equality is created, stressing that both sides of the sponsorship programme are happy with what they receive. Important to note is that in contrast with other advertising, the letters included in fig. 1 were all anonymous, and sponsor family was only indicated as "Mr and Mrs F with 3 children." This universalises the letters, making them applicable to any connection that could

[141] *Sponsorships*, pamphlet, Save the Children, ca. 1970, SCF/FR/8/7/2, SCF Archive.

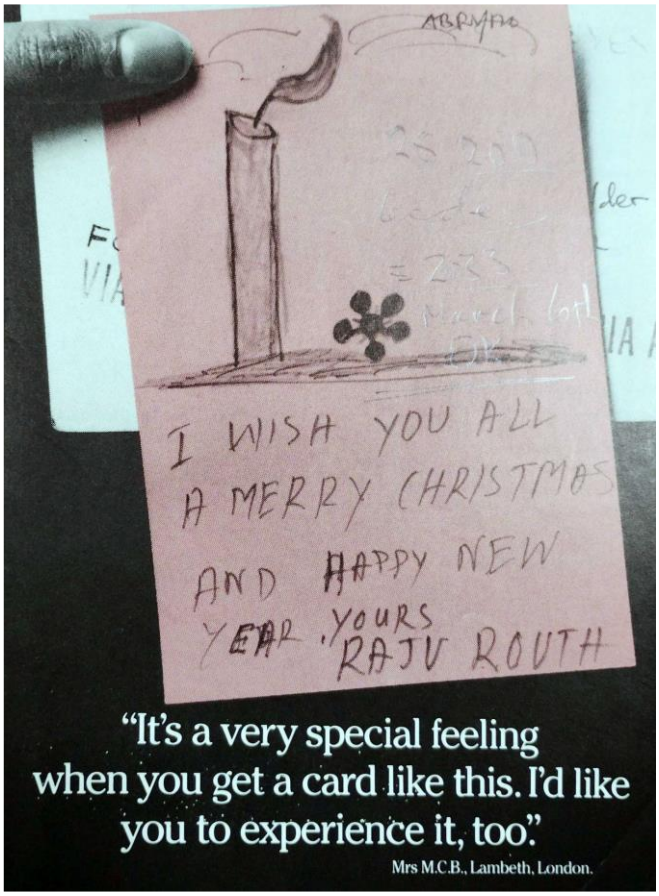

Fig. 2: Cover of a Save the Children pamphlet.[142]

be made between a sponsor and the sponsored child through Save the Children programmes. This advertisement shows that Save the Children believed letters to be a key advertising strategy in this period, and shows what they thought donors would value: gratitude, feelings of international friendship and the opportunity to see a ”shy little 7 year old boy” grow up into a successful adult due to the support from sponsorship programmes. Whether these letters were in reality a representations of real letters was not relevant to Save the Children, since it was meant to appeal to the emotion of the donor rather than to represent facts, showing its worth for marketing campaigns.

In the previous advertisement the letters were supposed to be general stand-ins for letters that could be received in the programme, but individualising these advertisements was also seen as an effective way to appeal to donors in the 1980s. The second advertisement, rather than focussing on the universal, leans into the personal nature of child sponsorship programmes. The donor was fully named on the cover, but “Raju Routh,” the child who is sponsored by the donor is too. In fact, later in the pamphlet they referred to Raju once more,

[142] *Sponsorship pamphlet*, Save the Children, ca. 1980, SCF/8/7/2, SCF Archive.

stating that he liked to write letters but also enjoyed sending drawings, one of which is displayed on the cover. Although this information tells us little about Raju's life situation, he was portrayed as a real child rather than as an example of a universal image of a child in need. Advertising like this emphasises the individual nature of the relationship between the different parties in a sponsorship programme, making it possible for a donor to know personal details about their sponsored child.

This advertisement also heavily stressed the feeling of the sponsor over the potential good they were doing for the child. The donor liked receiving cards like this, and invites the audience to participate in sponsoring a child in order to have a similar feeling when a child writes them. This stresses the power relation between the donor and the child, since the donor enjoyed receiving letters, but there is little word of Raju enjoying the letter writing process. He likes drawing, but does he enjoy the letters he receives as well? This is not mentioned by the advertisement, and it is ultimately irrelevant for perpetuating the letter-writing system. This advertisement confirms that letter writing was a practice primarily advocated for to please the donor, not because it was something the children necessarily wanted to participate in.

The card that Raju has sent is also a Christmas card, a tradition in England where this campaign was held but not necessarily one that Raju had been part of before he was sponsored, and suggests that the cards or letters received through the sponsorship programme are even more special than regular Christmas cards. This advertisement is focussed on Western tradition and targeted to the benefits the donor would receive from letter writing, while the role of the children in this process is diminished. Raju is individualised, he has a full name, a hobby and a nationality, but he is not the focal point for this advertisement. This advertisement discusses how much the donor will benefit from such an exchange, and the desires of the child, whether they get a similar special feeling when they receive a letter is not seriously considered, likely due to the fact that the benefit for the child is in the money they receive, and the letters are somewhat irrelevant on their end of the bargain. This some questions regarding altruism within sponsorship, since if the donor feels the need to receive something physical for their money, in this case letters and drawings, it is not "true altruism" the way aid organisations often promoted their work.

The last 1980s advertisement selected for closer inspection again emulated the form that a letter from a child could have taken and showed the power imbalance between the donor and the child. Fig. 3 shows a letter styled as if it came from a child in India, no more

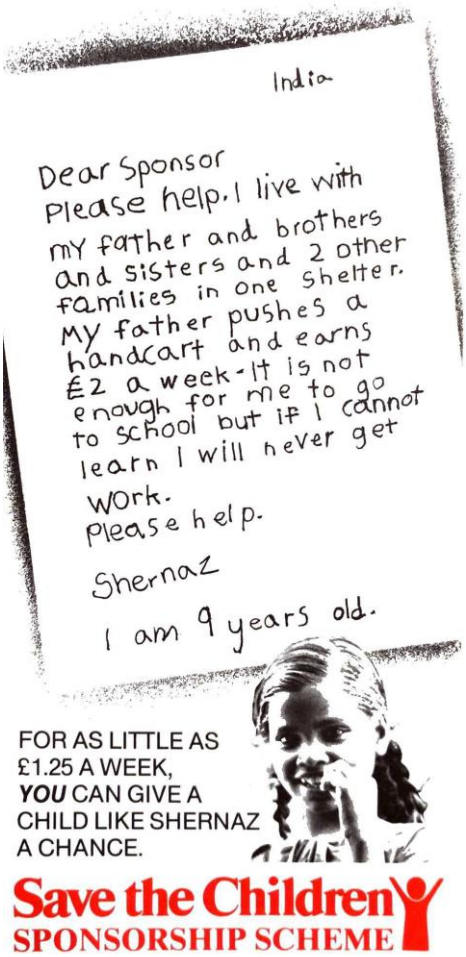

Fig. 3: Sponsorship Scheme pamphlet by Save the Children.[143]

specificity given, and shows an appeal from a child they have called Shernaz. This letter, starting evocatively with "please help" is meant to grab the attention of the reader, but there is no illusion that this letter would have ever been passed on to the donor had this letter actually existed. Save the Children's internal documents are very clear about "begging letters" revolving around asking for more money, they are inappropriate and should have been rejected and rewritten by the Save the Children in order to not upset the donor. According to the handbook previously mentioned, begging letters were harmful to the continuation of the sponsorship scheme since "many sponsors are not well off and some can ill afford the basic subscriptions."[144] Begging letters were not allowed, but this was only a known fact within the organisation, and this was not widely reported due to the fear that Save the Children would be

[143] Sponsorship pamphlet, Save the Children, ca. 1980, SCF/8/7/2, SCF Archive. .
[144] *Save the Children Sponsorship Handbook* 1972-1973, SCF Archive, 31.

accused of censorship of the letters. This letter by 9-year-old Shernaz thus did not represent an example of the letters that donors could receive, but encourages a certain narrative for the public who saw this advertisement. By representing this as a letter from a sponsored child, the donor could imagine themselves as "saving" this child, they were the hero that children in poverty may need. In this letter, compared to the advertisement before, the donor is not an international friend who received drawings from their sponsored child, they were the saviour of an impoverished child. This advertisement evoked different emotions than the previous one, but again stressed the donor as the one who matters in a letter-writing context. They could choose to donate, but a child could not escape poverty alone, according to this advertisement.

Focussing advertisements on the benefit of the person who is going to spend money as a result of seeing it is only natural, but it breaks the illusion of a relationship between a donor and a sponsored child being an exchange in which both parties are alike and gain similar benefits from their acquaintance. The desires of the children were not relevant in most of these advertisements, the focal point is on the donor's idea of what child sponsorship could do for them, a type of humanitarianism that Chouliaraki describes as "post-humanitarian," focussing on the donor's feeling instead of those in need.[145] Children's names, faces, nationalities and hobbies are provided in these advertisements, but their actual lives are only footnotes to what writing letters could do for the donor. Although the advertisements stress what good a person could do when engaging with a sponsorship programme, the "selfish altruist," who seeks to gain something even when doing something good for those around them, is present in the expectation of letters and gratitude coming from the children.[146] The 1980s saw this type of advertising flourish, seeking to appeal both to individual connection and a feeling that aid should benefit the donor as well as the child receiving money. Individualism is central to this type of advertising, and shows that the good that your money could do did not only benefit a child, but also the donor who gave money, making letter writing a good example of the type of humanitarianism popular in the 1980s.

Public Perception of Letter Writing

Despite the popularity of advertising with letters, there was also a rise in criticism surrounding letter writing in the 1980s by some members of the public. An article about child sponsorship,

[145] Lilie Chouliaraki, "Post-Humanitarianism," *International Journal of Cultural Studies* 13, no. 2 (2010): 119.
[146] Barnett and Weiss, *Humanitarianism in Question*, 12.

published by the *New Internationalist* in 1982 titled "Please do not sponsor this child" showed some of the public criticism levelled at aid organisations who participated in child sponsorship programmes and letter writing specifically. Peter Stalker, the author of the article had a myriad of problems with the practice ranging from its divisiveness, its relative inefficiency in helping children, and also wrote an extensive section on the letters writing integral to these programmes. Stalker has worked with the United Nations and was thus not outright dismissive about international collaboration and aid, but he had few kind words for child sponsorship.[147] Stalker raised several points regarding letter writing as a symbol of major issues in the child sponsorship practice, and using his article it is possible to see that letter writing represented a type of power relation between sponsor and sponsored child that was highly unequal and based more on economic disparity than on international camaraderie.

Mirroring the practices of humanitarian organisations, Stalker primarily focussed on the individual stories of children to make his case. He describes "Manuel," a boy in a Latin America who received letters about skiing holidays from the European family that sponsored him which he did not understand.[148] Stalker described that the sponsors can educate their own children about the world through this sponsorship programme, but Manuel did not gain a lot from these letters about places and circumstances he is unfamiliar with. Another piece of anecdotal evidence that Stalker gave discusses a girl from Peru, who believed that her sponsor was going to ask her to live with their family soon due to their friendship, an invite that never came to fruition.[149] These examples paint a picture of writing letters to sponsored children as creating empty expectations and ultimately leaving children to be disappointed, a claim supported by research that proves that when children do not receive letters from those who sponsor them or receive letters that they do not like it leaves them feeling inadequate.[150] As Stalker phrased it: "The donor may gain but the foster child loses," showing that letter writing fits into the post-humanitarian structure primarily focussed on the donor. Stalker shows through his examples that the letter writing aspect of sponsorship seemingly benefits aid organisations and donors, but negatively impacts the child, showing that it is a practice not really aimed at them, despite aid organisations' insistence to the contrary. The promise of

[147] Peter Stalker, "Home," *P. Stalker,* accessed May 4, 2023, https://www.pstalker.com/.
[148] Peter Stalker, "Please do not Sponsor this Child," *New Internationalist*, May 1, 1982, https://newint.org/features/1982/05/01/keynote.
[149] Ibid.
[150] Feeney et al., "Impacts of Child Sponsorship Communications," 8.

equal communication is proven to be nearly impossible according to the examples given in this article.

Stalker also discussed a problem that sponsors themselves often brought up surrounding the letters that they received from the children; the letters did not contain any real content, they were general thank you letters with little personal information about the children. According to the handbook of Save the Children, this was most likely due to "lack of application on the part of the child."[151] What the cause may have been in reality is unclear, but it is difficult to imagine that a sponsor could feel like they had a connection with a child who responded to all their letters simply with a thank you and short updates about their progression in school, showing that perhaps the practice was not that beneficial for donors either.[152] The advertisements primarily focussed on the donor as being the one who benefited most from letter writing projects, but problems like this prove that donors could be unsatisfied by the practice as well. If this is the case, why continue with letter writing?

The answer to this question is not immediately obvious. While some news publications in the 1980s were raising concerns about the practice of letter writing being unnecessary both for donors and for the children, it still continued as a practice. The reason why this expensive and unsatisfying practice maintained its popularity with aid organisation after the 1980s, may not be found in its public messaging about global friendship and communications, but instead in private discussions held by Save the Children in the 1980s. Ultimately, neither the public nor the children were in control with programmes like this, so Save the Children's perspective on the practice needs to be considered to fully understand why it was so crucial for fundraising for so long.

Reports on Letter Writing

While the advertisements showed no real shift in Save the Children's attitude towards letter writing, internally the organisation was discussing its merits and why they should continue with it. Save the Children was clearly aware of the discourse surrounding the efficacy of letter writing in creating equal relationships, but still chose to continue using them. This section will explore why this decision was made, and explore letter writing's merit as a marketing technique rather than as a socialising method.

[151] *Save the Children Sponsorship Handbook 1972-1973,* SCF Archive, 29.
[152] Stalker, "Please do not Sponsor this Child."

In April 1987, Save the Children published a report on the characteristics of child sponsors involved in the Save the Children fund, although it was only available through their own library. The researchers asked a broad array of questions, focussing both on demographic characteristics as well as on their opinions on different NGOs, advertising and what donors valued as projects. Several noteworthy pieces of data emerged from this type of research. Sponsors by far brought in the most amount of money on average, with sponsors donating £180 a year while other donors only gives about £87.[153] Arguably, the reason that sponsorship was so persistent is the idea that making people feel involved in the lives of those they help makes them more loyal donors. They asked if their sponsors felt like this worked, and eight out of ten sponsors said that they did, showing that sponsorship does work for creating a feeling of connection with an organisation.[154] Perhaps paradoxically, 46 percent of sponsors agreed with the statement that "once you donate to charities they never leave you alone."[155]

The data found in this research shows that while donors did want a personal connection, within the power structure of donor, recipient and organisation, the one that mattered most to them was the connection with the recipient. Save the Children knew that keeping sponsors happy was important, so they did a lot to maintain these high-level donors, for instance by sending personal thank-you letters from the head of sponsorship.[156] However, this was not enough to keep donors engaged, since donors said they would prefer less letters from Save the Children as an organisation. This seems contradictory at first, but sponsors sought a personal connection with the aid recipient, but not necessarily with Save the Children. Discussions about administration costs and the amount of money that actually reached its intended target when donating to a charity has always been a topic of a lot of debate, a concern visible in the declarations of Save the Children that of every pound donated, 88p goes to the child.[157] For donors, it seems like they did at times enjoy gaining a personal connection with their sponsored child, but the constant communication from Save the Children broke the illusion of international friendship. Individual connections are hard to envision for a donor once they keep receiving letters from a large organisation who controls this personal connection between donor and child. While letter writing created the façade of

[153] Table 9. Profile of Donors – IX. Source: "A Report on a Survey of the Characteristics of Child Sponsors Covenantors and Other Donors to the Save the Children Fund," Apr 1987, SCF/FR/8/1/6, SCF Archive, 17.
[154] "A Report on a Survey of the Characteristics of Child Sponsors," 52.
[155] Table 22. Attitudes to Charity in General, "A Report on a Survey of the Characteristics of Child Sponsors," SCF Archive, 37.
[156] Emma Nicholson, letter from Emma Nicholson to Ursula Haegele, Feb 5, 1985, SCF/FR/3/2/FAM/3, SCF Archive.
[157] "Please Keep the World's Children Going," ca. 1981, SCF/FR/8/7/2, SCF Archive.

private personal connection, donors realised through communications like this that Save the Children ultimately controlled this relationship, making the personal transactional once again.

The second report shows why the continuous communication that stressed the transactional nature that bothered donors was not enough to dissuade Save the Children from its way of operating these programmes. This report, although published in 1992, was part of a longer research project that was conducted in the 1980s. It sought to research whether they could change their existing sponsorship programme and what the reaction of their existing sponsors would be. This report also revealed information about the sponsorship programme that explained and complicated the existence of letter writing as an aspect of these programmes. The report described that 87 percent of sponsors would renew their sponsorship if they were unable to keep their current child, showing the loyalty of the donors to their chosen organisation.[158] However, only eighteen percent of respondents gave "personal contact" as the most important reason for sponsoring a child.[159] In other tables, the personal contact is also repeatedly placed as being of secondary importance over the good things their money was doing for the child.[160] The report also noted that the majority of donors only sent a letter twice a year, with 16 percent not sending any letters. This mirrors the amount of letters that they received in return.[161] Crucially, 91 percent of sponsors would have continued donating even if the letters became even less frequent or even stopped all together.[162] If sponsors were unable to send gifts to their children, 96 percent would have continued to keep supporting the programme regardless.[163] While most sponsors suggested a potential lessening of enthusiasm for the programme if these facilities were dropped, none seemed interested in actually leaving the programme. This data suggests that letter writing, while being promoted as a highly valuable part of sponsorship programmes, actually mattered little to the financial outcome for Save the Children when looking at their existing sponsors. Once someone had

[158] Table 13A. Sponsors Projected Behaviour in Funding or Current Scheme was Altered. Source: The Chapter One group, "An Examination of Two Alternatives to the Existing Child Sponsorship Scheme," May 4, 1992, *Save the Children,* SCF/FR/8/7/9, SCF Archive.
[159] Table 8. Main Reasons for Wanting to Help a Child Through Sponsorship – All Sponsors. Source: "An Examination of Two Alternatives to the Existing Child Sponsorship Scheme," SCF Archive.
[160]Table 9. Summary of the Relative Importance of Factors when Deciding to Support Child Assisting Now – All sponsors. Source: "An Examination of Two Alternatives to the Existing Child Sponsorship Scheme," SCF Archive.
[161] Table 15. Frequency of Sending Letters in a Typical Year – Sponsors ; Table 16. Frequency Sponsors Receive Letters in a Typical Year. Source: "An Examination of Two Alternatives to the Existing Child Sponsorship Scheme," SCF Archive.
[162] Table 17A. Sponsors Projected Behaviour if Letters were Discontinued from Current Scheme. Source: "An Examination of Two Alternatives to the Existing Child Sponsorship Scheme," SCF Archive.
[163] Table 22A. Sponsored Projected Behaviour if Gift Facility was Discontinued from Current Scheme. Source: "An Examination of Two Alternatives to the Existing Child Sponsorship Scheme," SCF Archive.

committed to the programme, they were unlikely to rescind their donations, even if personal connection between them and their sponsored child was in reality non-existent.

These reports show that when looking solely at the existing donor's opinions, continuing to include letter-writing facilities in their sponsorship programmes is not necessary, but it also polled potential donors who had not yet joined the sponsorship programme. This group stated that personal contact with the child was listed as by far the most important reason they were considering joining the programme.[164] This shows that the connection between donor and child was not the ultimate goal of Save the Children, it was raising money, and procuring a steady stream of new donors accomplished this. As a method of creating connection, letter writing was ineffective, but as a manner of fundraising it was very important. While the power relations between donor and donor recipient are immediately clear, the aid organisation's influence is equally relevant, and is coloured by their desire to compete with other organisations. In the end, the donor and the child were not the ones who letter writing benefitted most, it was Save the Children who could gain more money through continuing to promote programmes like this. Advertising was hugely important for aid organisations, and letter writing proved itself to be marketable, even if it in reality only rarely created truly personal connections the way that donors, and perhaps children as well, were looking for.

Conclusion

The reasons behind the appeal and disavowal of letter writing within sponsorship are hard to gauge: it depends on what the letters contained, if both parties were interested in writing letters, and the effort of the local aid organisation workers. In some studies, children report feeling like they have a friend abroad due to the letters, giving the letters a very positive appearance.[165] However, more often than not, this personal contact was not very personal at all, and left both the children and the donors unmoved by the practice, making letter writing a contentious topic in this period. The continuation of this practice thus can be mostly attributed to its marketing appeal. It is visual, it suggests intimacy and it gives the sponsor a tangible return on the money they donate every month, like Zarzycka suggested when discussing why people donate in this way.[166] It is thus no wonder that advertisements by Save the Children

[164] Table 36. What Interests Donors Most about Wanting to Help a Child Through Sponsorship having received Literature. Source:"An Examination of Two Alternatives to the Existing Child Sponsorship Scheme," SCF archive.
[165] Feeny et al., "Impacts of Child Sponsorship Communications," 6.
[166] Zarzycka, "Save the Child," 37.

heavily leaned on representations of letters in order to promote their sponsorship programmes in the 1980s. It also seemed to be effective, with potential donors seeing the letters and personal contact as a major selling point according to the sponsorship reports. This desire for satisfying the potential donor instead of looking at the needs of a child alone can be seen in multiple different fundraising methods set up by aid organisations, and was also linked to the rise celebrity humanitarianism and the role of large, spectacular appeals in raising money in the 1980s, which will be discussed in the next chapter.

Celebrities and Starving Children

Humanitarian action was given a glamorous new appearance in the 1980s with the heightened popularity of celebrity involvement in aid efforts. Events like Live Aid, as well as less universally known concerts like Oz for Africa or USA for Africa drew some of the largest celebrities and made being involved in humanitarian aid heavily intertwined with popular culture.[167] Bands like U2 and Queen were giving performances in order to help alleviate the famine in Ethiopia, and the Christmas single "Do They Know it's Christmas?" which was meant to benefit charity reached number one, becoming the fastest-selling single in the UK in 1984.[168] This type of humanitarian aid allowed music enthusiasts to feel like they were changing the world while engaging in something they enjoy.

This low-impact manner of humanitarian engagement is reflected in more modern phenomena like volunteer tourism, which is also inspired in some sense by celebrity culture.[169] One article about the topic stated that through volunteer tourism, "getting in touch with your inner Angelina Jolie is easier than it used to be."[170] While the emphasis on celebrities and high-publicity events dominated and changed the humanitarian scene in this period, these types of fundraising started to replace more personal and private ways of giving. However, this emphasis also reaffirms existing power hierarchies, celebrities make inequality and attempts to lessen it "fashionable," while implicitly showing Western elites as the solution to this problem.[171]

These mass appeals frequently revolved around distended bellies from hunger, African children with haunting eyes forcing the audience to consider their plight, and unforgiving deserts which made up the perception of countries struck by famine, all narrated by a famous person.[172] It's a phenomenon more frequently called the "starving baby appeal," and it was

[167]Michael Ray, "Live Aid," *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, accessed May 10, 2023, https://academic-eb-com.ezproxy.leidenuniv.nl/levels/collegiate/article/Live-Aid/488745.
[168] Richard Harrington, "Thought for Food: Band Aid's Bob Geldof and His Musical Fight for Famine Victims," *The Washington Post (1974-)*, Dec 18, 1984.
[169], Mary Mostafanezhad, *Volunteer Tourism : Popular Humanitarianism in Neoliberal Times* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2014) 5.
[170] Laura Fitzpatrick, "Vacationing like Brangelina," *TIME Magazine*, 26 July, 2007.
[171] Patricia Daley, "Rescuing African Bodies: Celebrities, Consumerism and Neoliberal Humanitarianism," *Review of African Political Economy* 40, no. 137 (2013): 377.
[172] Mona Mannevuo, "Reading the Faces of Hunger: Disturbing Images of Child Malnutrition in the World Press Photo Competition," *European Journal of Cultural Studies* 17, no. 2 (2014): 137.

common in some forms of advertising prior to the turn of the century, despite resistance to the trope since its rise to popularity after World War II.[173] Live Aid and celebrity humanitarianism made use of this type of marketing, but a growing tide of criticism started to change aid organisations' perspective on it. Critics argued that it made famines seem like a natural occurrence, despite the fact that the famine of the 1980s was more accurately mixture of unfavourable weather conditions for crops as well as the political decisions made by a government which prioritised military spending.[174] The famine of 1984 was an disaster that certain organisations had seen coming for a long time, exemplified by a discussion between conservative chairman Sir Anthony Kershaw and Colonel Hugh Mackay, who was overseas director of Save the Children at the time. Mackay was asked why he did not warn the British government before the famine started claiming lives, to which Mackay responded that he did, but was ignored.[175] His response to what happened when he reported his concerns was a strong "they did fuck all, sir," a quote struck from the official record kept by the House of Commons.[176]

This famine, the celebrity involvement and its starving children, were major events in the 1980s for humanitarian organisations, and by exploring how this was dealt with it is possible to see how aid organisations started changing their strategies to accommodate the societal shifts that these events created. In this chapter I will explore the impact that the Ethiopian famine and the fundraising surrounding it had on established aid organisations like Save the Children. I will first explore Live Aid and other forms of celebrity fundraising in order to explain the change in humanitarian marketing around this period, as well as explaining the uncomfortable position aid organisations found themselves in because of Live Aid's success. After this, I argue that the decline of the "starving baby" imagery popular in humanitarian marketing is directly linked to the simultaneous popularity and controversy of mass-appeals like Live Aid who frequently used this type of imagery. In many ways, events like Live Aid marked a change in the way fundraising and advertising humanitarian causes functioned, and forced reconsideration surrounding long-established traditions like child sponsorship. Although child sponsorship persisted for at least another decade within Save the

[173] Janice Nathanson, "The Pornography of Poverty: Reframing the Discourse of International Aid's Representations of Starving Children," *Canadian Journal of Communication* 38, no. 1 (2013):104.
[174] Alex de Waal, *Evil Days : Thirty Years of War and Famine in Ethiopia* (New York, NY: Human Rights Watch, 1991) 4-5.
[175] Gill, *Famine and Foreigner,* 41.
[176] ARTICLE 19, the International Centre on Censorship*, Starving in Silence : a Report on Famine and Censorship.* (London: ARTICLE 19, 1990) 92.

Children after Live Aid, the shift noticeable in the humanitarian sphere at the time in some ways predicted its change in form later on.

Live Aid and Celebrity Humanitarianism

In October 1984 the BBC included a report by Michael Buerk in their news broadcast, discussing the famine situation in Korem, Ethiopia. In the report, Buerk narrates the disaster he finds when he visits Korem, calling it a "biblical famine," and "the closest thing to hell on earth."[177] Buerk's reporting has been described as misleading by some academics, making the famine appear as inevitable, focussing on the anguish without looking at its causes.[178] However, this approach worked in making Europe and the US aware of the serious circumstances in Ethiopia, and sparked mass mobilisation. This broadcast is an example of the rise in prominence of video broadcasts in creating activism, with television making us aware of the 'spectacle of suffering,' making people unable to look away disasters.[179] Broadcasts like this inspired Bob Geldof, lead singer of the Boomtown Rats, to act, and led to the recording of "Do they know it's Christmas?" by various different artists under the name Band Aid, and the subsequent concert series under the name Live Aid. Benefit concerts were not a new practice, but the sudden involvement of celebrities in some of the largest fundraising campaigns in the world did cause a shift in the perception of humanitarian aid, and showed that the public supported mindset in which international aid should be satisfying to the donor as well as effective in alleviating global crises.

The operation of Live Aid showed that within the general public, there was a desire for change in the humanitarian sphere. Geldof, when setting up the Live Aid concerts in order to benefit the Ethiopian famine, was not a seasoned humanitarian worker. In fact, he saw this as an advantage over other humanitarian efforts, the fact that Live Aid could move beyond politics and existing institutions, reaching people across the political spectrum. As Geldof himself stated, "it isn't something to be argued over or thought about or rationalized… It doesn't matter who gives what aid or who is to blame."[180] Live Aid was performed simultaneously in London and in Philadelphia, but due to the televised nature of the concerts it attracted attention throughout the world. The concert was performed by major artists of the time like Queen, U2, David Bowie and Sting, and was officially opened by Prince Charles

[177] Michael Buerk, "BBC News, 10/23/1984," YouTube video, posted by "Live Aid1," Nov 13, 2009, accessed May 10, 2023, https://youtu.be/XYOj_6OYuJc.
[178] Kuhnert, "NGOs, Celebrity Humanitarianism and the Media," 265.
[179] Lilie Chouliaraki, *The Spectatorship of Suffering* (London: SAGE publications, 2006) 24.
[180]Harrington, " Thought for Food."

and Princess Diana in London.[181] A large part of the world was paying attention to Live Aid and the Ethiopian famine, and the star-studded approach made its mark on humanitarian advertising of the future.

The idea that music could somehow solve a crisis was highly influential, and many seemed to deeply believe in this narrative. The public was very eager to accept this message as well, and between April 1984 and September 1985, Band Aid and Live Aid earned £34 million for famine relief while Save the Children, the next most successful organisation, only took home £15.8 million in the same period with their traditional methods of fundraising through letters, advertisements and community efforts.[182] Geldof commented that "the price of saving a life this year… is a plastic record," and this approach proved effective in mobilising the public for a good cause.[183] Live Aid however, despite their influence in fundraising, did not have the infrastructure that "traditional" aid organisations had, which led to collaboration amongst them, with Live Aid raising funds and aid organisations using this money to do their field work. While this looked to the public as a happy marriage between groups fighting for a common goal, internal communication proves that this relationship in actuality was a lot more contentious.

This was not because there was an irrevocable rift between celebrity fundraising and NGOs. Save the Children generally was happy to receive the support and help from celebrities, seen in their advertising but also in other projects set up by them. Their newsletter *World's Children* frequently reported on the generosity of celebrities, for instance a donation by Genesis, who gave Save the Children £70,000 from the proceeds of their UK tour.[184] The band members of Queen are described as "good friends to SCF," when they donated £50,000 to the organisation.[185] In private, other celebrities also get involved, with David Knopfler from Dire Straits receiving a personal thank-you letter when sends in a donation from the "Musicians against Poverty Trust."[186] Celebrity fundraising and endorsements were also not a new concept from the 1980s either. In the 1950s and 1960s, World Vision used Roy Rogers and Dale Evans as figureheads for "adopting" Korean children through sponsorship, seeing

[181] Megan C. Hills and Sara Feigin, "How Bob Geldof's 1985 Live Aid concert changed celebrity fundraising forever," *Evening Standard,* Apr. 23, 2020.
[182] Kuhnert, "NGOs, Celebrity Humanitarianism and the Media," 27
[183] Richard Harrington, "Geldof's Plea for the Starving: On the Hill, the Live Aid Organizer Lobbies Congress Bob Geldof," *The Washington Post (1974-),* Jul 24, 1985.
[184] "Phil Collins at the Glasgow Opening…" *World's Children,* SCF/P/2/WOR/64, SCF Archive.
[185] "Friends will be friends…" *World's Children,* 1986, SCF/P/2/WOR/63, SCF Archive.
[186] Judy Beard, Letter from Judy Beard to D. Knopfler, Dec 18, 1987, SCF/FR/8/1/7, SCF Archive.

these celebrities as good representations of Christian values and American patriotism.[187] Using famous people to promote child sponsorship and more generally international aid continued into the 1980s, where Save the Children also used a celebrity couple to convince the public to donate. In an advertisement that was spread through different newspapers in the US and in Britain throughout the 1980s, Joanne Woodward and Paul Newman and their dog are photographed together with framed pictures that showed the children whom the couple sponsored.[188] The advertisement explained how fulfilling they perceived the sponsorship programme to be, while simultaneously making references to contemporary concerns with humanitarian aid, namely that it created dependence.

In traditional aid organisation's advertising in this period, it is possible to see an emphasis on self-reliance and independence, which is partly why they clashed with the advertising of Live Aid. In the last paragraph of the Newman and Woodward advertisement, Save the Children stated that "57 years of experience have taught us that direct handouts are the least effective way of helping children," ending this segment with "so hardworking people can help themselves and save their own children." What they do instead is never mentioned in these advertisements. Aid organisations in the 1980s wanted to step away from the feeling that the West alone is able to "uplift" struggling communities, and sought to "help them help themselves." Even an organisation like Save the Children, who have had the saviour narrative in the name of their organisation since the beginning, started to become concerned about the agency granted to those living in disadvantaged situations. This is not a one-time mention in their advertising either, another advertisement from this period stated that "of course, Save the Children doesn't give direct handouts…" The fact that this is a statement that seemingly necessitated an "of course" explains what the public opinion was about "handouts," and that Save the Children wanted to distance themselves from the idea of simply handing money to an individual in order to solve their problems. The effort to distance themselves from paternalist and overbearing methods of aid, echoing a continuing movement which required small government and little interference in the lives of individuals by institutions explains the shift in humanitarian organisations in this period.

This focus on independence cannot be found in Live Aid advertising, which partly explains the tension between Live Aid and traditional aid organisations. While Save the

[187] Henquinet, "Missionary, Citizen, and Consumer," 14.
[188] "We share our love with seven wonderful children we have never seen. We'd like to tell you why," *New York Times*, Aug 21, 1988.

Children wanted to emphasise helping people help themselves, Live Aid was less concerned about the agency of people in Ethiopia. Within the larger field of humanitarianism, these types of advertising suggest a level of disagreement about the future of aid, seen both in the public eye and in private conversations between Live Aid and Save the Children. The problem was thus not the ethical consideration that saving a life was achieved through concerts and the sale of records, it was the way that Live Aid sought to communicate with traditional organisations and the general public, they sought to remain outsiders in the humanitarian field and did not want to engage with criticism towards their way of operating their fundraising campaigns.

Live aid and Save the Children had a relationship, but it was heavily strained. Live Aid sought to give Save the Children money, but wanted the money spent on material objects, so Save the Children requested money for tyres in order to be able to move supplies and people through the famine-stricken region. Live Aid then wanted to know about what brand of tyres they thought of purchasing, and why they sent in an invoice for one brand of tyres over the other.[189] The money Save the Children asked for was often not received, or delayed, and one employee complained that they "have virtually given up getting any more out of Band Aid. Blood out of stone etc." and further stating that the people at Band Aid "resent" them for their initial success in winning a bid for money from Band Aid/ Live Aid.[190] In return, it seemed like this resentment was mutual, with Save the Children being displeased about having to explain why they could not give an exact price for the tyres since they would be sourced locally.[191]

The relationship between Save the Children and Live Aid is a good example of humanitarian cooperation and celebrity aid in the period of the 1980s. Although collaboration was necessary to help the most amount of people, there was conflict about what the best way to help would be, there was a feeling of competition for donations as well as a disagreement on marketing strategies. Some traditional aid organisations felt like celebrity aid was primarily a performance, a way of creating a power structure in which Western celebrities could heighten their status without having to question why these crises occurred.[192] This is

[189] "Project Summary Sheet Save the Children," Jul 30, 1985, SCF/FR/3/2/FAM/3, SCF Archive.
[190] Chris Wilson, letter from Chris Wilson to Attorney Lewis Kaplan, Oct 3, 1984, SCF/FR/3/2/FAM/2/3, SCF Archive.
[191] Chris Wilson, letter from Chris Wilson to Attorney David Millar, Oct 11, 1985, SCF/FR/3/2/FAM/2/3, SCF Archive.
[192] Lisa Ann Richey and Dan Brockington, "Celebrity Humanitarianism: Using Tropes of Engagement to Understand North/South Relations," *Perspectives on Politics*, 18 no. 1 (2020): 46.

exemplified by Bono's exclamation in "Do They Know it's Christmas?" where he tells the audience "Well tonight thank God it's them instead of you!"[193] This line contradicts the message of the benefit concerts and the song itself: if we are all equal and this problem transcends politics, why is this hierarchy of luck not questioned further? Why was the West in a position to "feed the world," as the chorus of the song stated, while other people starved? However, most organisations engaged with this type of thinking in some way, so this criticism was seemingly easily ignored. The imagery used by Live Aid, which featured multiple malnourished Black children who needed to be "fed" by the West perpetuated an idea that was not unique to them, but was increasingly controversial. Due to the large increase of attention to humanitarian projects and specifically how to deal with crises, advertising by organisations like Live Aid and the mirror they held up to the techniques used by traditional aid organisations paved the way for a change in this aspect of aid advertising.

Starving Baby Appeal

The use of shocking images of children experiencing disease, famine or war is a marketing technique that has been very popular as well as lucrative for aid organisations for many years, but the practice also continuously attracted criticism. In Buerk's broadcas there are several clips included of malnourished children crying, looking fruitlessly for food, and even a lingering shot of the dead body of a mother and her baby, wrapped in cloth with only their feet visible, ready to be buried. This imagery was deliberately chosen to evoke a feeling of outrage and to reveal the magnitude of the problem of malnutrition in Korem. This way of raising funds, shocking the audience into receiving donations, was an effective way of raising money for aid organisations for many years, but due to an increase of public scrutiny, humanitarian organisations had to move away from this type of advertisement, or at least be very careful with the way they handled this type of imagery.[194]

Using this type of advertising had always been popular due to its ability in evoking emotions from their audience, so before the 1980s, most aid organisations saw little need to change this approach. In the 1970s, Save the Children was still making avid use of advertising meant to startle the reader into giving them money, but evidence started to emerge that there

[193] "Band Aid – Do they know its Christmas," YouTube video, posted by "BandAidVEVO," Nov 24, 2011, accessed June 13, 2023, https://youtu.be/bmj7KlIut1w.
[194] "The Starving Baby Syndrome is Hurting Africa's Image," *New African*, Dec 1, 2010, 72, accessed June 13, 2023.

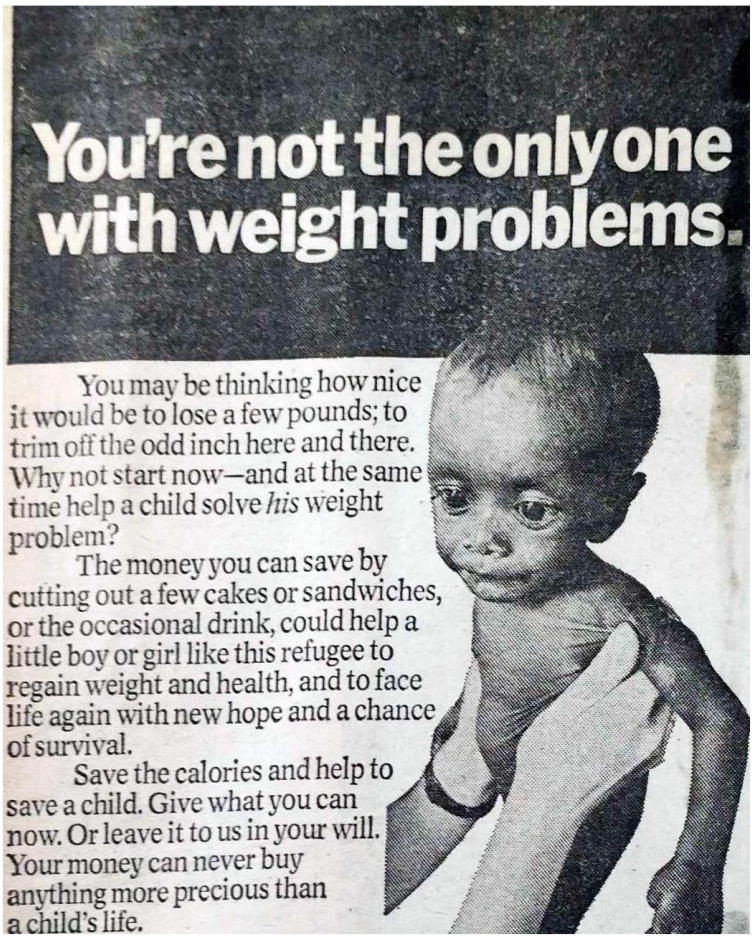

Fig 4: Example of an advertisement by Save the Children from Easter 1976[195]

was a need for change. The titles of these 1970s advertisements are deliberately provocative, including "would you let this child starve in front of your house?" or "if you have ever loved a child remember SCF in your will" as well as the simple "don't turn your back on this child!" next to the picture of the back of an malnourished child.[196] Especially jarring are the advertisements used in 1975 and 1976 during the holiday season, which had titles like "while you're going to parties, we're going to funerals," "while you're eating between meals, he's dying between meals," all accompanied by different pictures of starving children.[197] These advertisements are meant to provoke outrage, to show the stark differences between the happy occasions in Europe and America and the precarious situation that children in Africa found themselves in, and above all, they intend to shock.[198] The images included in these

[195] "You're not the only one with weight problems," easter 1976, SCF/FR/13/3, SCF Archive.
[196] *Advertising Scrapbook, 1964-1977,* SCF/FR/13/3, SCF Archive.
[197] "While you're going to parties, we're going to funerals," *Telegraph,* Nov 28, 1975, SCF/FR/13/3, SCF Archive; "While you're eating between meals, he's dying between meals," *Management Today,* Nov 1975, SCF/FR/13/3, SCF Archive .
[198] Chouliaraki, *The Spectatorship of Suffering,* 203.

advertisements are hard to look at, and Save the Children was aware of this fact, including in the copy of one of the advertisements that "we thought that we should never again be forced to show you a picture like this."[199] The images were effective, since they were uncomfortable for the audience while being simultaneously hard to look away from. The only course of action, thus, would be to help prevent starvation like this from occurring in the future.

In the public and academic sphere however, there was a growing feeling that this type of imagery would in fact have the opposite effect. Susan Sontag's *On Photography*, published in 1977, rejected the idea that seeing a disaster helps with creating empathy. She argues that repeated exposure to atrocities dulls our sense of outrage towards them, making the horrible ordinary over time, and perhaps worst of all for aid organisations, it makes tragedy appear insurmountable.[200] Sontag's work became very influential, and *On Photography* and elaboration of this theory, *Regarding the Pain of Others,* fit in with the works of other important cultural theorists like Michel Foucault, Roland Barthes and Jean Baudrillard.[201] Allowing people to believe that they could make a difference in harmful situations was the way that humanitarian organisations were able to function, so the idea that repeated exposure to shocking images which arose during the popular television campaigns could lead to less caring people rather than creating more of them was something to consider for aid organisations and their marketing teams.

While the shock-photography was being questioned from an academic standpoint during this period, the general public also expressed concerns about the practice at the end of the twentieth century. In an article discussing charity appeals which employed mail marketing they discuss an advertisement which invites readers to imagine the degradation of a happy child once they go hungry, and questions the amount of money actually donated to those who need it because of these shocking appeals.[202] In cinemas, an advertisement showed a child drinking out of a dirty toilet bowl which was not linked to a particular charity but instead encouraged the public to consider the 'Third World" and their relation to it.[203] In the *New York Times*, a short story discussed how quickly those faced with poverty and homelessness start to be indifferent to the pleas for money and squalid living conditions.[204] In 1990, *The*

[199] "While you're eating between meals, he's dying between meals," SCF Archive.
[200] Susan Sontag, *On Photography* (New York: Dell Publishing, 1977), 15.
[201] Phillip Lopate, *Notes on Sontag* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009), 205.
[202] Janis Johnson, "Tis the Season for Charity Appeals: Holiday Mail Tugs at Heart, Purse Strings for Poor, Sick," *The Washington Post,* Dec 17, 1977, b1.
[203] Martin Loat, "Set Out to Shock: Ad Focus," *The Guardian (1959-2003),* Apr 17, 1989.
[204] "Masks of Poverty," *New York Times (1923-),* Jul 31, 1989,

Guardian looked back on certain advertisements by charities meant to shock and frighten the audience into donating money and reflected on the process that makes advertisements like this necessary. The professionalisation of humanitarianism made international aid a business the way that all other business function, including a need to compete for money from their audience, and shocking audiences allowed for more attention on their organisation.[205] Due to the fact that mass media events like Live Aid brought people face to face with these shock images more often, the fact that the appeal for change would grow as well makes sense.

Shock is one way to draw attention, but there is evidence that there is a real risk that this type of advertising alienates and offends the audience rather than making them sympathetic to a cause.[206] Shocking advertisements garnered attention, but looking at a sampling of public responses seems to suggest that not all attention was good attention in this case. A shift to a more positive type of messaging was needed to show that aid in fact could provide improvement rather than simply showing the harsh realities of those living in crisis situations, as well as to appease the rising criticism that came with portraying those in need as being without agency. While Save the Children still did not shy away from showing children in peril during the Live Aid period in 1984, a pamphlet they distributed included a starving baby on the front, they also saw that shock alone was not enough to bring in the donations.[207] In a letter asking their overseas liaison officer whether new photographs could be made available surrounding the Ethiopian famine, they stated that they wanted to depict the "positive side of the African drought," which entailed people receiving food and being helped by Save the Children's field workers.[208] Aid organisations started to realise in the 1980s that getting people's attention alone was not enough, they needed to inspire action, and the only way to keep people interested is to keep the hope alive that by the actions of the their organisation, disaster situations could be improved.

This shift was partly inspired by the increased popularity of Live Aid, but the concerts themselves did not seem to adopt this move to positive messaging. Although some advertising for large benefit concerts focused primarily on the artists who would be participating, showing videos of different artists and playing their most popular songs, depictions of famine

[205] Stephen Cook and Jeremy Myerson, "Making Charity Sweet again," *The Guardian (1959-2003),* Sep 17, 1990.
[206] Ibid.
[207] "Famine in Africa" leaflet, 1985, SCF/FR/3/2/FAM/6, SCF Archive.
[208] Michael McCarthy, letter from Michael McCarthy to Chris Wilson, Jun 2, 1985, SCF/FR/3/2/FAM/1-2, SCF Archive.

were also prevalent.[209] ABC aired a commercial with images from refugee camps, zooming in on a child's face with the message that their "only hope is you."[210] Live Aid and projects similar to it did not feel like they were comparable to traditional humanitarian organisations, and thus did not feel compelled to participate in the larger debate about humanitarian advertising. Their advertising was criticised by other humanitarians because of this, who did not like the focus on "saving" the local population.[211]

The criticism of Live Aid's advertising did not mean that traditional aid organisations completely distanced themselves from using similar themes however. Live Aid suggested donating money because the children currently starving could be the next "Mozart, Mark Twain [or] Shakespeare," which is not dissimilar from an advertising campaign Save the Children ran with the headline "Save the Children brings you word from the engineers, doctors, lawyers and nurses of 1993."[212] Both focus on the potential that would be wasted if children did not grow up with enough food and opportunities, and focus on careers and people their Western audiences would perceive as being 'successful.' The many criticisms that may have emerged from aid organisations about the way Live Aid functioned were warranted at times, it was frequently disorganised and the expertise of those in charge was questioned due to their inexperience in emergency aid.[213] Live Aid's advertising was frequently contested as well, but as is evidenced in the aforementioned example, this criticism from other NGOs was not always without hypocrisy. Despite this, Live Aid, due to its sheer prominence in the cultural landscape in the 1980s, did start a trend which made organisations like Save the Children question the way they operated and whether starving children continued to be the way forward.

Conclusion

Events like Live Aid and a growing discussion on what is appropriate regarding advertising of humanitarian organisations made the 1980s a tumultuous time in the humanitarian space.

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[209] "Live Aid Concert TV Commercial from 1985," YouTube video, posted by "Retro Rabbit Ears," Feb 21, 2018, accessed May 16, 2023, https://youtu.be/y82B-dWyuAw.
[210]"ABC Live Aid Commercials 1985," YouTube video, posted by "Joe Zaldivar," Jul 9, 2014, accessed May 16, 2023, n https://youtu.be/0hS7ZgrP5fI?t=123.
[211] Kuhnert, "NGOs, Celebrity Humanitarianism and the Media," 271.
[212] "ABC Live Aid Commercials 1985" ; "Save the Children brings you word from the engineers, doctors, lawyers and nurses of 1993," *Observer*, Jul 6, 1972, SCF/FR/13/3, SCF Archive.
[213] Steve Coil, "Live Aid and the Swirl of Criticism: Leaders Under Fire as Disorganized, Slow Live Aid Finances Famine Relief," *The Washington Post (1974-)*, Nov 22, 1985, https://login.ezproxy.leidenuniv.nl/login??url=https://www.proquest.com/historical-newspapers/live-aid-swirl-criticism/docview/138420024/se-2.

This, combined with world leaders who sought to reframe social welfare and make it the business of private enterprise, reshaped old ways of looking at humanitarian work. While these big events were often unrelated to child sponsorship programmes, the advertising changes that occurred carried over into these kinds of projects as well. Celebrities became increasingly involved in the projects like these, and Paul Newman was followed by a long list of celebrities who linked their name with the Save the Children organisation and its sponsorship programmes, currently including Enrique Iglesias, Jennifer Gardner and Camila Cabello, showing the enduring popularity of celebrity activism that arose in the 1980s.[214] Starving children in high-contrast black and white are now increasingly replaced by smiling faces and bright colours, showing the positive impact that your donation could have. The 1980s were a contentious time in humanitarianism, with organisations competing like for-profit companies do and internal struggles for power and money, but it also sparked change that started to reject the starving baby appeal, and led to the world donating more money than ever before to end the disasters that we could increasingly follow live on television.

[214] "Ambassadors," *Save the Children,* accessed May 17, 2023, https://www.savethechildren.org/us/about-us/ambassadors.

Conclusion

This thesis only captured a small aspect of the field of humanitarianism, but it is a part which can be said to be emblematic for larger movements in the world of international aid. The power struggles that are inherent to humanitarianism has taken many different shapes in its long history, and child sponsorship and the advertising surrounding it is able to capture these shifts well. A focus on potential and the economic "value" of a child is something that can still be seen today, but certainly has roots in the 1980s, where aid needed to have a purpose beyond saving a child for a single day, it needed to provide a future for them. The focus on success on the job market mirrors an increased focus on individualism in the West in this period, showing that the goal of aid organisations to rise above political influences was unachievable. This individualism returns in different forms, not only inherent in the donation model in which the donor supports one child as opposed to a community at large, but also in the persuasive marketing technique of letter writing, which was being questioned in the 1980s. Child sponsorship created a system in which the donor, the child, and the organisation are all intimately intertwined, although who has the upper hand in this power dynamic constantly changes, since even the children, who have the least economic power in this structure, are integral keeping the organisation successful. The power of money and those who control it comes to the forefront when looking at large events like Live Aid and celebrity advertising, which is able to mobilise a large amount of donors very quickly. In the 1980s, the field of humanitarianism was in many ways at the cusp of altering the way they operated, with forces like celebrity humanitarianism, increased professionalisation and neoliberalism shaping the way the world would think about aid in the future.

Turning our attention to humanitarianism and child sponsorship in our current day, it is obvious that events in the 1980s have made their mark. Within Save the Children, child sponsorship is now heavily localised: although the US branch still participates in the practice, many European national branches do not. In Britain, this shift away from individual sponsorship can be seen when looking at their programme in the late 1990s, "Child Link," which sought to still provide personal contact, but with the child serving as an ambassador to their community, and it being very apparent that the money would not go to a single child anymore.[215] Child Link fizzled out in the early 2000s, and was not replaced with a new

[215] "Welcome to Child Link," pamphlet, ca. 2000, SCF/8/7/2, SCF Archive.

initiative in a lot of countries. Although there is no official statement to be found about Save the Children's move away from child sponsorship in most places, the reason behind it can be speculated based on evidence of the time. Although in the 1980s child sponsorship was still very popular and lucrative, it was also increasingly contentious and linked to attitudes of paternalism and neo-colonialism.[216] In a period in which international aid at large was being placed under a microscope, and events like the Rwandan genocide creating a wave of criticism against aid organisations, child sponsorship started to seem clumsy and inefficient.[217] Additionally, with international travel and communication becoming faster and more accessible, some cracks in the sponsorship image started to form. Newspaper *The New York Times* reported on people receiving letters from children who had in actuality already died in Mali, as well as most sponsorships having had little positive effect for the children who were alive.[218] Child sponsorship persists to this day, but can primarily be found in religious aid organisations, whose donors perhaps have a stronger belief in the "family of man" than the average population. If Kaell is correct in crediting missionaries with the first international child sponsorship programmes, the practice has in a sense created a full circle; it begins, and now continues to persist, due to a kind of faith in the universality of humankind.[219]

Although child sponsorship is an interesting avenue to explore when discussing humanitarian power structures, there are many more aspects of humanitarian history that deserve scholarly attention. As brought up briefly in the chapter describing domination in child sponsorship, adoption, fostering, and sponsorship are all terms that have been used for supporting a child abroad, but they do have vastly different implications. Some reports exist that people would go on to visit the children they sponsored, breaching the idea that the relationship between a sponsored child and a donor is simply transactional even more than traditional sponsorship does. The power dynamic in instances like this becomes even more complex, and although it certainly was not emblematic of the majority of sponsorship relationships, these select cases could be explored to uncover the overlap between financial supporter and friend or family that those who sought out their sponsored child pursued. Another field that has so far received little attention is the rise of "slacktivism," or "post-

[216] Some examples of articles which question child sponsorship's efficacy include: Carol Coulter, "Public must Know Where Aid Money Goes," *The Irish Times (1921-)*, May 19, 1987 ; "Eye-Opening Realities," *The Observer (1901- 2003)*, Oct 30, 1988.
[217] Jonathan Gregson, "Charities: We're Appealing but should You Sponsor Us?" *The Observer*, Mar 15, 1998.
[218] Jane Fritsch, "Donations from the Heart, Greetings from the Grave," *New York Times (1923-)*, Apr 05, 1998.
[219] Kaell, "The Long History of Child Sponsorship," 48.

humanitarianism," which is now often linked to online protests, but in fact can be traced far further into the past. Most aid organisations had gift catalogues, often with items which were not connected to the organisations, which could allow a donor to buy a commodity while still feeling like they were supporting a good cause.[220] Digital humanitarianism, which is currently largely only explored in the social science realm, can be tied to earlier activism efforts in which the popular forms of media of the time, newspapers, radio, television, were employed to create mass interest in providing aid.[221] The field of humanitarian history has recently become more popular, but there are many questions still unanswered and eras still largely unexplored, proving excellent prospects for the future of the field.

With my research I have shown the way that one organisation changed and processed events in the 1980s. Save the Children reflects some of the best as well as some of the worst that aid organisations had to offer at this time, making their approach to sponsorship a fascinating case study. A quote often attributed to Eglantyne Jebb reads that "Every generation of children offers mankind the possibility of rebuilding his ruin of a world."[222] The 1980s showed that this goal would be pursued in many different ways, and in some ways we are continuing to explore how to achieve this rebuilt world Jebb envisioned.

[220] Save the Children has published a large amount of gift catalogues for nearly every occasion, a large amount coming from the 1980s. They are stored at: "Sale Catalogues, including Christmas cards – 1955-2000," SCF/FR/5/5/2-21, SCF Archive.
[221] Fleur Johns, *#Help: Digital Humanitarianism and the Remaking of International Order* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2023) 15.
[222] Robert Henderson, Sarah Kline, Claire Leigh, Martha Mackenzie and Alastair Russel, *Next Generation Aid: Making UK aid Deliver to Children* (London: Save the Children UK, 2017), 5, https://resourcecentre.savethechildren.net/pdf/next-generation-aid-2017.pdf/.

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