



VOLUNTARY ACTION HISTORY SEMINARS

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SEMINAR ABSTRACT

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Exporting visions and saving children – the Swedish Save the Children Fund

The Swedish Save the Children Fund (Rädda Barnen) was established only a few months after the original branch in Great Britain. The relief-work carried out by the Swedish organisation were mostly directed to Austria and Germany during the first years of its existence but in 1924 it withdrew from international relief-work altogether. Donors' interest in the organisation's relief-activities decreased significantly and the lack of funding forced the organisation to concentrate its activities within the country instead.

However, at the outbreak of WWII this changed and in only a few years the Swedish Save the Children Fund grew into an organisation of both national and international importance. This position enabled it to have a large impact in shaping politics and policies in issues concerning children. To gain this position the Swedish Save the Children Fund had to negotiate its position in relation to other organisations, nationally and internationally, as well as gaining the trust of Swedish authorities. This also necessitated more complex decision-making processes as to where and to whom relief should be directed. Furthermore, the organisation had to adjust to the changing social conditions in Sweden during and after WWII, creating its space in the developing welfare state. In this presentation examples of how interactions with other organisations and authorities affected the Swedish Save the Children advancement will be highlighted. What impact this had on the organisations utilitarian founding principles, to help as many children in as many places as possible will also be accounted for.