

Case Study: Save the Children Jordan

Save the Children is an international non-governmental organization (NGO) that was founded in the United Kingdom in April of 1919. The organization was founded by Eglantyne Jebb, a British social reformer, who established the organization to feed children facing starvation following the end of World War One. Since then, the organization has both developed their goals and gone international. In today's age, the goal of Save the Children is to promote children's rights, provide relief in crisis situations, and support the development of children in developing countries. As of 2018, Save the Children has spread to 29 countries around the world, spanning six continents.

One of those countries is the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan. Save the Children Jordan (SCJ) was established in 1974 and originally focused on aiding the most deprived children within the developing country. To this day, Jordan is still the only country in the Arab world to have a Save the Children office. Due to this fact, Save the Children Jordan (SCJ) added an additional office titled Save the Children International in 2012, in order to better promote children's rights throughout the entire Middle East region. While originally, SCJ's goals were only to aid impoverished Jordanians, after the start of the Syrian Civil War in 2011, and the influx of refugees that the conflict caused, SCJ refocused their efforts on aiding the thousands of fleeing Syrian refugees. According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), there are now over 650,000 registered Syrian refugees in Jordan.

As an NGO, SCJ works in close association with government entities, NGOs, donors, UN agencies, and Community-Based Organizations. In terms of aid, SCJ does not compete with other NGOs to see which organization aids refugees the most. Rather the competitive side of the organization comes out in their funding. SCJ competes with other NGOs working within the

region for funding from different donors, NGOs such as Amnesty International, The Red Cross, the International Rescue Committee and Action Against Hunger.

The ethics aspect of SCJ is very rigorous because of the type of work the organization does. SCJ views their work with children as not only a mission but also a responsibility. Due to this way of thinking, there are several strict codes of conduct when working with children that SCJ abides by. In terms of the media, there are several handbooks that all reporters and photographers for the organization need to follow. The main ones being “Safeguarding Children in Our Communication and Media Work” and “Image Guidelines: How we make, gather and use images.” These documents outline what media staff can and cannot do on the field. Three of the main guidelines being: when interviewing child refugees their parents must be within speaking distance, consent forms must be signed by the subjects before and after the interviews and media staff can not be alone with a child.

In terms of advancement within the organization, many of the media staff at SCJ that perform exceptionally and do noticeable work are moved to the media team of Save the Children International (SCI). This is considered a huge advancement because the global reach of SCI is far greater than SCJ and the media projects are far more complex. This type of advancement is most common for professional journalists who then decided to work in advocacy journalism later in their careers.

As an intern in the Advocacy, Media and Communications (AMC) Department, I report directly to Saif Dirani, who is the Media and Communications Officer in charge of interns. He reports directly to Nancy Afram, who is the Media and Communications Manager. She reports to Rania Malki, who is the Chief Executive Officer of SCJ. As an NGO, Malki does not report to a

specific owner but rather to the board of the organization. After developing a better understanding of the organization I was working for, I reached out to several members of my department to hear their insights about SCJ and the field of advocacy journalism.

To gain a better understanding of SCJ's operations, I spoke to Saif Dirani, my immediate supervisor, who had been working in the field of international security before transferring to advocacy journalism last year. Dirani was first interested in this field of journalism by the media team of the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization in Iraq, who he worked for from 2010 to 2011.

“Working in a global movement such as Save the Children presents opportunities to grow as a professional because of the diverse knowledge shared across the movement and its platforms,” Dirani said. “I wanted to work with SC because it allowed me to enter the field of humanitarian international development, which will open up doors globally and allow me to work in different countries.”

I related to what Dirani was saying because we were both interested in working abroad and were both new to the field of advocacy journalism. But being new to this type of work was one of Dirani's greatest challenges.

“Some of the challenges I face in my job include a lack of training and an overwhelming workload at times,” Dirani said. “Having changed career paths, I have had to bring myself up to speed by reading material available to me by Save the Children and by learning everything about working for an NGO as fast as I can.”

I thought this was important to hear because if I am to pursue my career in journalism, I will need to adapt to my surroundings. During my career in journalism, moving to different cities or countries because of work would require me to learn about an entire new culture as quickly as possible. As someone now in the field of journalism I asked Mr. Dirani if he had any advice for an aspiring journalist.

“Plan ahead. I am a big believer in the phrase ‘failing to plan means planning to fail,’” Dirani said. “You cannot determine where you want to end up in 10 years because the field changes and you grow as a professional, but you can always plan 2-3 years ahead in order to achieve your goals and reflect on what opportunities you should seize and which to say no to.”

Dirani reports directly to Nancy Afram, who is the head of the AMC department and has been in the field of advocacy journalism a little longer. Afram has been working in communications for the last decade and has been at her position in SCJ for the last three years, a position she is planning on keeping.

“I love being a part of a great organization that works for a noble cause,” Afram said. “Serving the most vulnerable children is a great honor, and being responsible for communicating the great achievements of our organization is a huge responsibility for me.”

To keep up with the amount of work that she has to do as the leader of the AMC department, Afram is constantly reading UNHCR statistical updates, Situation Reports produced by other Save the Children offices and Save the Children International’s newsletter.

“Reading all of those documents is how I keep track of everything going on the world,” Afram said. “It is easy to get caught up in my own world because of the amount of work I have to do, but professionals need to keep reading because that is how we generate new ideas and keep performing to the best of our ability.”

According to Afram, reading and gaining more knowledge was one of the most important skills an aspiring journalist can have, but not the only one.

“Knowledge is power, keep searching, build relations with everyone and be nice,” Afram said. “Also, always stay focused on your goal and stick with your ideals. This type of work is exhausting and you can easily be tempted to quit, but you need to just keep pushing through because what you are doing matters.”

In order to get as many perspectives as possible in my case study, I asked another member of the AMC department to view their portfolio. Massa Kanaan, who had previously been a writer at Al Arabiya, a news organization based in Dubai, allowed me to view her

portfolio, which was organized very similarly to many of the portfolios I have seen in class and at the SPDC. The sections of her portfolio were divided into the type of reporting that was being featured, the main ones being Investigative Reporting, Feature Reporting and Event Reporting. In each section she had 3-5 single byline stories she had written in this style of reporting. Besides her portfolio page, she also had a Photography page and an About Me page. Her portfolio best demonstrated his reporting skills.

I had the opportunity to show her my portfolio and she shared several compliments and suggestions. She first commented on the simplicity of the site and it's navigation. As a first time viewer, she felt very at ease when exploring the website. She also commented on my About page, which she enjoyed. She said it was short but informative and also allowed the viewer to get to know me a little more through the anecdote I had used. In terms of suggestions, she first suggested I have a "My Best Photos" section in my Photography page, and then another section featuring my photo series. She suggested this so if a employer only wanted to see my ten best photos, they would be easily accessible. She also suggested, in each section of my portfolio I only put 3-5 pieces of work. This number was chosen because he believed it would be the perfect balance between quantity and quality. As it would highlight my best work but also show I've done more than one story for every section.

As a whole, I felt this was a wonderful portfolio review because I liked all of Kanaan's suggestions and really feel it will help my portfolio look better. I do plan on making these edits to my portfolio as soon as I get access to the Adobe Workshop and ENN's online content hub.

I've enjoyed everyday of the last two weeks I've been working with SCJ. In this short time, I have come to appreciate several traits of their office. The first trait is their organization.

By my third day in the office, I had been given security, safety and media clearance to begin working in Za'taari Refugee Camp, a process I had originally expected to take at least 10 working days. SCJ's organization is also seen in the way they document their communication with refugees within the camp. Photos, videos, b-roll, transcripts and correspondence are all easily accessible online from every interview they have done. The communications team can easily pull different information from interviews and fact check their reporting. The second trait is their communication. As SCJ is the only branch of Save the Children in the Middle East, they are in constant communication with dozens of other Save the Children offices around the globe. Naturally, as Jordan is on the frontlines of the Syrian Refugee Crisis, SCJ is constantly being asked for photos, videos, quotes and updated statistics regarding the crisis. Despite the AMC team only having five members they are able to easily keep up with these constant requests for information. The last trait I have been most impressed with is their ethics. Each member of the AMC team strongly believes in the work they are doing. In the two weeks I have been working here, I have not seen a single shortcut. Each member of the team prides themselves in following protocol and doing everything they can to make the children they interview comfortable. It has been made very clear to me that the AMC's main goal is not to make money for the organization, but to tell the stories of the individuals in refugee camps as accurately as possible.

The only aspect of the AMC Department I have struggled with is their lack of focus on the international aspect of their work. The main audiences they are focusing on are the Jordanian people and other Save the Children offices. They do not try to reach different audiences around the world, which is something I am trying to change. If the department can expand their target audience to not just these two groups, interest in the work SCJ is doing would grow.

The leadership skills I have encountered in SCJ and the AMC department are very impressive. The leadership mindset within the office is focused on leading from the field. An example of this leadership, is that everytime an opportunity comes to work in the refugee camps, members of management are always first to volunteer. Working in the refugee camps is by far the most difficult aspect of the job, but not a single member of management shys away from going. I've found this has inspired others without positions to be equally as eager to go into the field. By seeing management not only being willing to work in the office but also being willing to do the grunt work in the field, everyone seems to be happy to do whatever job needs to be done. In terms of management skills I have encountered, a major focus of management has been delegation. As an NGO there is always a lot of work to go around and never enough people. I've noticed management does an excellent job in spreading the work in a way that no member of the team feels overworked or under utilized. An example of this management, is the delegation of work they have been doing for World Refugee Day on June 20. This day is a big deal for SCJ and there is a lot of preparatory work that goes into coverage, the way management has been delegating this work has really made the team feel prepared for the upcoming deadline.

As a whole, I've loved working with SCJ and I am very much looking forward to the next month and a half. I hope they are as enjoyable as the past two weeks have been.