

Adaptive operational technology helps change children’s lives



Save the Children International



Save the Children International (SCI) helps children stay safe, healthy, and learning. Using a single, connected Unit4 ERP platform, the global nonprofit benefits from complete, unified financial visibility and transparency – from the moment a sum of money is raised to the moment it is spent.

According to SCI’s Chief Information Officer Julian McGovern, “Unit4 is Save the Children International’s most critical application, underpinning funding, procurement, and staffing.”

- Enabled consolidation of global nonprofit organization onto a common finance platform for increased agility and control
- Manage restrictive funding programs – ensuring comprehensive funding and expense reconciliation
- Adapted a common platform quickly and easily to meet local in-country financial requirements

Championing children’s rights worldwide

Save the Children International champions the rights of children worldwide, putting the most vulnerable children first. The nonprofit’s global network of approximately 25,000 people works alongside children in 117 countries. SCI’s ambition is that, by 2030, no child dies from preventable causes before their fifth birthday, all children receive a quality basic education, and violence against children is no longer tolerated.

Financial management at SCI is complex in its application. Finance needs to act in the interests of the charity and its beneficiaries, protect assets, and ensure strict governance is met across all the countries in which it works.

Julian McGovern explains, “Our challenge is to create complete visibility over income and expenditure, from donations and legacies, to day-to-day operational costs and global programming spend. As a global organization, we also need to report regularly to international regulatory bodies, whether it’s the UK Charities Commission, USAID, or other governance entities. We also need to be accountable on cost: that means having granular insight from fundraising

Industry
Nonprofit

Location
London, UK



Size
Approx. 25,000 staff in 117 countries

Product
Unit4 Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP)

Challenges

Replace country-based silos of financial data and systems. Orchestrate financial management around a single, unified platform that simultaneously provides global granular insight and local configurability.

Key metrics

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|  <p>TRACEABLE</p> <p>End-to-end nonprofit finance visibility</p> |  <p>ADAPTIVE</p> <p>Flexibility to meet local finance regulations</p> |
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Julian McGovern

Chief Information Officer, Save the Children International

initiatives through to expenditure on programs, whether related to tackling pneumonia and hunger or protecting children during war.”

In response, Julian and his team are transitioning Save the Children International member organizations to a common model of standardized finance processes. “The aim is convergence,” he says. “That doesn’t necessarily mean the same finance technology platform everywhere, but it does mean common processes. We want our member organizations to act as one unified global organization, using a common finance function and the same finance processes, adapted locally to meet in-country finance operating rules.”

Connected, adaptive finance platform

This is where Unit4 comes in. SCI has standardized on a common instance of Unit4 ERP in 10 member organizations to run and scale operations more successfully. More will follow soon.

Julian says, “SCI is not legislating that member organizations have to adopt Unit4. Instead, we are using our influence to demonstrate that this connected, adaptive finance platform can deliver significant synergies in terms of financial accounting and governance. And because Unit4 is configurable, we are able to tailor implementations as local needs demand.”

The integrated ERP platform provides comprehensive visibility and control over the nonprofit’s finances and reporting — at member country level and aligned at the international level. Intelligent automation provided by Unit4 is used to streamline routine processes, such as timesheet entry.

Much of SCI’s income is restricted funding, meaning donations can only be used on certain specified programs, like the Syrian refugee crisis or a child immunization program in South Sudan. Using Unit4, the finance team can monitor and control this type of funding and easily provide the necessary reporting.

This flexibility is helping Save the Children International provide traceability, accountability, and governance. For instance, four levels of general ledger (GL) coding underpin SCI’s complex financial analysis.

“With so many entities and staff, that complex accounting structure enables us to establish precise monitoring and reporting of our project financials,” says Julian.

Traceability from point of fundraising to in-field spend

Julian highlights the value of this granular, unified financial insight, explaining, “It’s no exaggeration to say that, thanks to Unit4, we can now track the pound someone donates through a television appeal right through to it being used to improve literacy in Rwanda.”

Reporting is more straightforward, too. Julian again. “Some 95 percent of our staff use intuitive timesheets based on Unit4 to speed up their administration and free up time for more value-added activities. From the Democratic Republic of Congo to Nairobi, we can accurately and frequently control the time spent on charitable projects.”

Another advantage is the extent to which the nonprofit is able to customize the application themselves. “We are growing our Unit4 skills in countries worldwide,” says Julian. “The system is easy to learn and configure. We are also building Unit4 application support skills in places like Dakar, Nairobi, and Manila. Unit4 is Save the Children International’s most critical application, underpinning funding, procurement, and staffing.”

