

CASE STUDY

SAVE THE CHILDREN INTERNATIONAL (SCI): Streamlining Global Program Management and Results Monitoring

OVERVIEW

Since May 2018, Save the Children International (SCI) and Synergy International Systems, Inc. (Synergy) have been working together to develop and deploy SCI's global information system for program portfolio management and results monitoring. It is known as the Programme Reporting, Information Management and Evidence (PRIME) System.

Save the Children is one of the world's largest independent organizations for children, with a combined annual turnover of more than \$2 billion. Since 2015, SCI has reached more than 60 million children annually through its services. [The Save the Children Association \(SCA\)](#) comprises 30 independent national member organizations with 25,000 staff across 122 countries. With so much at stake, adopting a centralized organization-wide system is a transformational step toward achieving SCI's core objectives.

THE CHALLENGE

SCI emerged after a series of reforms culminating in the 2009 adoption of a single global strategy for 2010-15, which provided the framework for transitioning a loose federation of national organizations into "one Save the Children."

Before the procurement of PRIME, SCI conducted a current- and future-state analysis that identified two significant challenges: a) inconsistent approaches to project management and b) variable standards of data collection practices. The study also revealed a tension between standardization and remaining adaptive and flexible based on local conditions and needs.

To address this tension, [SCI launched a project](#) known as the Programme Management Methodology (PMM) and Project Reporting Information Management and Evidence (PRIME). The PMM component provides a standard methodology for the entire project lifecycle. At the same time, PRIME delivers the toolset that enables this methodology by facilitating project management, data collection, and results reporting. SCI selected Synergy as its strategic IT partner to develop PRIME following a rigorous twelve-month competitive selection process. In May 2018, SCI and Synergy signed a five-year contract for customization, implementation, and



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support services. SCI chose Synergy because of our extensive track record in providing tailored services and solutions to governments and nonprofits at the intersection of monitoring and evaluation (M&E) and information technology. Another pivotal factor behind SCI's decision was our deep commitment to making [Synergy Indicata](#) an intentionally enterprise-level system that caters to the needs of all users of an organization, from different departments across regional and global leadership to program staff in the field.

THE SOLUTION

Because of both the uniqueness of SCI's membership structure and the organization's size and global reach, PRIME represents a unique example of a sophisticated enterprise-level monitoring system supporting the mission of a complex international NGO.

At its core, PRIME is designed to enable SCI to operate as a data-driven organization, supporting strategic planning, stakeholder accountability, organizational learning, and continuous improvement. It does so by

consolidating the flow of programmatic and results data across all participating country offices at all stages of the project lifecycle (design, approval, setup, implementation, and closure) and by making that data accessible and usable by different departments in country offices and across regional and global leadership. In short, PRIME is Save the Children's single source of truth about its international programs.

With PRIME, SCI is setting a new benchmark for how large, global NGOs can successfully achieve greater impact through a successfully executed monitoring system.

The project began with a three-month proof of concept, which successfully tested the collaborative implementation approach between the SCI Subject Matter Experts and Synergy's team. We developed the system using an iterative, agile process, with active engagement from country offices and key stakeholder groups. Through daily standups, the team came together to conduct the needs assessment activities, including in-person and remote workshops.

The workshops helped Synergy learn more about SCI's day-to-day operations and work through complex challenges, such as business processes, business rules, standardizing the structure of results frameworks, or the detailed workflows and calculations behind SCI's critical Total Reach Indicator, through which SCI reports the direct reach of its programs.

The SCI team developed and refined user stories. The Synergy team executed five-week development sprints, including two weeks for sprint preparation, two weeks of development, and one week of testing. Because SCI and Synergy had established robust collaboration practices before the pandemic crisis, we succeeded in keeping the project on track while working fully remotely for the entire final year of development.

At the outset, SCI established a successful project governance process that defined the executive focal points, governance meetings, and mechanisms for change control and dispute resolution. Throughout the project, stakeholders participated in biweekly service review meetings, monthly project review meetings, and quarterly executive review meetings. These continue throughout the support period.

ABOUT SYNERGY

Founded in 1997, Synergy International Systems, Inc. (Synergy) is a U.S. information technology company that provides monitoring and evaluation (M&E) software solutions to governments and nonprofits worldwide. To learn more, visit us at www.synisys.com.

THE RESULTS

PRIME went live in Q3 2021 and is now operational in Denmark, the Netherlands, India, Sweden, Rwanda, Burundi, Uganda, Kenya, Nigeria, the East and Southern Africa Regional Office, and the West and Central Africa Regional Office.

The system is being deployed on a rolling basis across SCI's entire global portfolio, achieving consolidated and streamlined reporting of project performance and results for the first time in SCI's history, all the while maintaining a decentralized management approach in keeping with Save the Children's federated structure.

SCI and Synergy continue collaborating closely on improvements and new functionality as part of a four-year support agreement.

What PRIME Does

- **Project Details:** provides general information about a project.
- **Logframe:** creates and manages project logical frameworks (or results frameworks) and performance indicators.
- **Detailed Implementation Plan (DIP):** manages a project's activities, tasks, and milestones through a Gantt chart interface.
- **HR Management:** manages project personnel.
- **People and Groups:** registers beneficiaries (individuals, households, associations, or communities) to ensure effective and auditable service delivery.
- **MEAL Plan:** organizes a project's MEAL (monitoring, evaluation, accountability, and learning) Plan.
- **Action Management:** manages actions beyond the scope of the DIP.
- **Partner Management:** tracks implementation partners and vendors.
- **Strategic Goals:** links projects to an implementing office's strategic goals.
- **Integration:** exchanges data with SCI's Oracle HR system, Award Management System, and financial management system.