

# INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION OF RED CROSS MANAGES HUMANITARIAN PROJECTS WITH BUSINESSOBJECTS XI

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 Michael Davis, Head of Finance, International Federation of Red Cross



## Industry

Not-for-profit/  
Humanitarian aid

## Business Process

Financial,  
operational

## Challenge

The organization needed to improve local reporting globally and reduce reliance on the Secretariat in Geneva.

## Why Business Objects?

BusinessObjects XI delivers the Web portal and ease of use to provide financial and operational reporting anywhere across the world.

## Business Objects Products and Services

BusinessObjects XI

BusinessObjects  
Data Integrator

Crystal Reports

## CHALLENGE

Founded in 1919, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (International Federation) is the world's largest humanitarian organization, providing assistance without discriminating as to nationality, race, religious beliefs, class, or political opinions. The International Federation is composed of 185 Red Cross and Red Crescent member societies, a Secretariat in Geneva, Switzerland, and more than 70 delegations, which are strategically located to support activities around the world.

Organizations across the not-for-profit sector face increasing demands for information transparency from donors, driving up pressure for excellent financial accountability and control. With continually escalating demands for humanitarian aid globally, International Federation strives to maximize effectiveness and efficiency.

Key to that strategy is the delivery of excellent financial and operational information, not only centrally at the Secretariat but also to local delegations and project managers working on over 1,000 projects. “By decentralizing both the collection of information and reporting, we can

empower delegations and field-based project managers to effectively manage local demands, while minimizing central overhead and maximizing the value of donations,” explains Michael Davis, head of finance at International Federation.



*The symbols of the International Federation of the Red Cross and the Red Crescent Societies resonate worldwide.*

financial reporting. The organization uses BusinessObjects™ software to produce international statutory reports and track the cost of implementing humanitarian projects. In 2006, the organization migrated to BusinessObjects XI to leverage the enhanced Web-based technology and improved graphical reporting. The Web-based capabilities opened up access to reports for geographically dispersed personnel. Davis says, “The BusinessObjects XI Web portal enables decentralization of reporting to empower local delegations and project managers.”

There were still a few challenges. For instance, in the case of billing reports, the organization used Crystal Reports® to draw from data sets that combined 10 to 15 tables, each composed of 25,000 or more rows. The volume slowed the performance of the reporting scheme. BusinessObjects Data Integrator XI relieved the pressure by automating the process of moving data. “We needed to be able to preserve the history of summary and transaction tables to

## APPROACH

At the heart of International Federation's reporting infrastructure is a Microsoft SQL Server data warehouse with multiple source systems, including Coda Financials, logistics, human resources (HR), and project management. International Federation has used reporting tools from Business Objects, an SAP company, since 2000, primarily for

maintain precise patient contact and billing records. BusinessObjects Data Integrator spared us countless hours of hand-coding,” says Davis.

The overall migration process proved to be easier than expected. “Bringing over our BusinessObjects Version 6.1 environment was pretty easy,” says Davis. “Most of the scheduled reports came over right away, thanks to the Import Wizard. Roughly 200 reports were moved within two months.”

## RESULTS

For International Federation, decentralization is a key benefit of adopting BusinessObjects XI. In the past, financial management of projects was centralized in Geneva due to the lack of information available in the field. Now, each of the organization’s 400 end users can operate in the field for the majority of the time, leveraging online reporting from BusinessObjects XI to manage resources.

The ease of use and improved graphical facilities of BusinessObjects XI prompted rapid adoption of the technology outside of the finance department, as logistics and HR departments increasingly recognized the value of real-time reporting. Today, International Federation has over 400 users of BusinessObjects XI across the world, from Africa to Asia Pacific, ranging from financial analysts to logistics and HR users. “The migration to BusinessObjects XI has increased the adoption of reporting across International Federation,” says Davis. “Using the Web portal, our global staff is finding it far easier to create and access reports online in each country, rather than relying on the Secretariat in Geneva. The localized reporting is far more efficient.”

Benefits of the organization’s migration to BusinessObjects XI include:

- **Improved project management.** Project managers are not only empowered but are also more accountable for field-based spending, with full responsibility for the management of resources and project completion. As a result, International Federation now has far better project management – and a measurable reduction in project deficits. “Improved visibility and accountability are essential to improve financial control across International Federation,” Davis says. “By devolving responsibility to project managers in the field and providing real-time reporting, International Federation gives project managers far more authority, responsibility, and accountability, which results in better project management.”
- **Delegation reporting.** Each delegation manages its own local finances, reporting monthly to the Secretariat. It used to require an entire department in Geneva working 20 days a month to process the financial requests of the delegations. BusinessObjects XI streamlined the monthly reporting process, reducing the central administrative burden.
- **Tsunami appeal.** The tsunami is the International Federation’s largest-ever project, with the organization delivering humanitarian aid in three affected regions – Indonesia, the Maldives, and Sri Lanka. BusinessObjects XI enables International Federation to consolidate data on expenditure and commitment from multiple delegations and project managers, and match that data against the single source of income received in Geneva. “Without BusinessObjects, International Federation would not have had the information required to manage the large-scale tsunami operation that extends across several continents,” says Davis.
- **Transparency.** International Federation publishes donor information on its Web site, including the largest donors and contributions to specific appeals. The organization uses BusinessObjects XI to automate financial reporting for donors, delivering the information transparency now required within the not-for-profit sector.

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