Fritz Institute hosted focus group meetings in Brussels and Nairobi in October of 2005 to review the development of its latest supply chain software. Logistics and IT professionals from over 20 different organizations attended the meetings.

**HELIOS Focus Group 2005** provided the opportunity for participants to:
- Compare HELIOS with existing in-house systems
- Understand the detailed functionality of the software
- See if the software provides an easy and user-friendly solution
- Hear and learn how other organizations are addressing technical and operational issues
- Compare HELIOS with other software products in the marketplace
- View and analyze the off-line solution offered by this software for use in the field

The meeting allowed Fritz Institute to obtain feedback from the participants on the concept and design and explore future steps.

**HELIOS Development Strategy: ASP Model**

HELIOS is structured on an ASP (Application Service Provider) model in which multiple humanitarian organizations share one system as tenants. This significantly reduces the cost of ownership and maintenance. Our objective is to enable small and medium-sized organizations, that may not have the proper infrastructure or resources, to better manage their supply chain by using HELIOS.

It is the vision of Fritz Institute to develop software that meets the logistics needs of the humanitarian sector by providing a system that enables better accountability of in-kind donations, gives improved visibility of relief goods from source to donation, and is accessible from anywhere. HELIOS is being developed as a solution for organizations that require flexible and modular software that is easy to implement and support.

Our goal is to create a community-wide solution for multiple organizations. HELIOS will also have off-line capabilities, allowing users to work from poorly connected areas. It will have the facility to synchronize off-line data with the main system so that users in the field will have access to the central database. Fritz Institute's goal is to build a User Community that will work together to enhance the software, and communicate across organizations by sharing common processes and vocabulary that will enable collaboration and benchmarking.

As a web-based system, HELIOS will be accessible to the end users across the world by using the Internet and an Internet browser (IE 5.5 and above).

HELIOS is a web-based N-tier system hosted on a Microsoft platform. It is based on the latest technology from Microsoft as listed
- Microsoft Dot Net framework 1.1
- Microsoft SQL Server 2000 (Database)
- Microsoft ASP.NET (Web platform)
- Microsoft C# (Programming language)

In an ASP environment, data belonging to each tenant (customer) can be hosted on one or more physical servers, which will provide a scalable solution with maximum data security.

Another unique aspect of HELIOS is the ability for organizations to choose between the light version of the software and the full or comprehensive version. It is also flexible enough to allow users to switch between the two versions depending on the specific needs of the users.
The following modules will be present in the new system:

- Administration - Sets up organizational structure and user hierarchy
- General - Provides a set of master data
- Request Processing - Provides visibility of demands for projects
- Project Management - Keeps track of total project requirements, project structure, project needs, appealed items
- Mobilization - Manages in-kind donations, loans and commodity tracking number (CTN)
- Procurement - Keeps track of entire procurement life-cycle
- Tracking - Supports tracking of movement of commodities (CTN).
- Warehousing - Provides information of activities in the warehouse(s)

**TO-BE Modules in HELIOS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Admin</th>
<th>General</th>
<th>Request Processing</th>
<th>Project Management</th>
<th>Mobilization</th>
<th>Procurement</th>
<th>Tracking</th>
<th>Warehousing</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ASP Admin</td>
<td>Masters</td>
<td>Request Order</td>
<td>Projects, Appeals</td>
<td>IKD</td>
<td>Purchase Requests</td>
<td>Waybill Tracking</td>
<td>GRN</td>
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<td>Global Setting</td>
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<td>Sales Invoice</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Purchase Order</td>
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<td>Waybill</td>
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<td>OU and User Admin</td>
<td>Masters: WH, Zone Bin</td>
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<td>Purchase Invoice</td>
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<td>Framework Agreement</td>
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<td>De-kitting</td>
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**Timeline and Priorities**

There was overwhelming support by the participants at both meetings to be a part of HELIOS Beta, which is planned for January 2006. There were also many encouraging suggestions from the participants for features and functionality for future releases. Based on the feedback at the meetings, the priority for the next few months is to improve the user interface to enable users of HELIOS to navigate through the system. Our aim is to create a product that would allow users to operate with limited training. Participants will be encouraged to try out various transactions using the online/offline software product. There will be a specific feedback form that will be provided to the participants for their input on the Beta Testing.

Upon completion of the initial Beta Testing, designated organizations will take part in a pilot program between January and July of 2006. The purpose of the pilot program is to test the software for actual operational transactions and provide feedback to our team. Organizations involved in the pilot will first take part in the Customer Engagement Process that will determine the organization's readiness for the pilot and define the organization's project management and logistics process.
**Actionable next steps**

- Create a simple document that will show what the new software is and is not (including screen shots)
- Create a HELIOS Focus Group that could evolve into a User Group as more and more organizations adopt the software. Some examples of projects that have been proposed by the participants for the HELIOS User Group or HELIOS Community Group
  - Common glossary and methodology
  - Facilitating the use of common catalogue of items
- First conference call of the HELIOS Focus Group will be held sometime in late November or early December to review progress to date; tentatively set for the week of November 27th (week 43). The actual date and details of the conference call will be announced by November 25, 2005.
- Provide framework of the pricing model for ASP, including information about the hosting companies and maintenance terms

**More Information**

For more information about HELIOS or the 2005 HELIOS Focus Group and to register to become a Beta participant, please email mitsuko.mizushima@fritzinstitute.org or remi.carrier@fritzinstitute.org