

A Solution to the Aid Crisis?

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Last year's succession of natural disasters, from the Indian Ocean tsunami to the hurricanes that battered the U.S. Gulf Coast, underscored the difficulty relief agencies have delivering supplies where they're most needed. The Fritz Institute aims to change all that.

The non-profit organization has launched Corporations for Humanity, an alliance between private enterprise and the humanitarian relief sector. Its mission is to mobilize corporate resources, technology and expertise for long-term improvement in the delivery of humanitarian relief supplies.

"As we've seen with the 2004 tsunami and Hurricane Katrina, aid agencies often lack the ability to evaluate or accept abundant corporate donations ... during the emergency phase of a disaster," says Lynn Fritz, director general of the Fritz Institute. "With Corporations for Humanity, [we] make it possible for companies to direct their philanthropy [toward solving] long-

term problems in disaster relief by sharing best practices in operations, technology, and supply chain management with the humanitarian sector. [T]he end result is more of the right aid delivered to the right people at the right time when the next disaster strikes."

One of those long-term problems is already being solved. In the aftermath of the December 2004 tsunami, the Fritz Institute received urgent requests from international aid agencies to develop software that would help them coordinate and distribute the shipments that came pouring in.

Corporations for Humanity members Applied Materials and Levi Strauss responded with substantial donations to fund a new "Humanitarian Supply Chain Solutions" software platform that is now under development. An ASP Web-based system built on the Fritz Institute's Humanitarian Logistics Software, the new software is

designed to improve visibility of goods, information and financing from donation to delivery. Once testing is completed, the Institute will provide the software to humanitarian groups. Corporations that have already joined the initiative include Applied Materials, BearingPoint, General Motors, Harcourt Education, Harris Interactive, Heidrick & Struggles International, Intel Corp., KPMG International, KPMG LLP (U.S.), Levi Strauss & Co., Microsoft Corp. and Philips Semiconductors.