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Fritz Institute Releases HELIOS -- Groundbreaking Software to Manage Humanitarian Organizations' Relief Chain Logistics

Fritz Institute, a leading force in improving the delivery and effectiveness of humanitarian aid worldwide, has announced that its HELIOS software platform, under development for the past two years, is now available to humanitarian relief organizations around the world.

Spurred by a flood of requests from relief organizations after the December 2004 South Asia tsunami for improved tracking software, and based on the mantra that good data drives good decisions, HELIOS provides real-time, easily available web-based information that allows for effective collaboration and coordination under complex and often dangerous conditions. The only software of its

kind built in partnership with humanitarian organizations, the HELIOS license is currently provided free of charge by Fritz Institute, while implementation costs are borne by user organizations.

Developed under the direction of Fritz Institute Chief Logistics Officer Mitsuko "Mich" Mizushima, HELIOS provides a huge step forward in aiding humanitarian relief organizations to catalogue, track and deliver supplies to disaster victims, a process fraught with difficulty in the best of circumstances and rendered excruciatingly chaotic at precisely the times when speed is crucial and delivery conditions the most difficult.

"Our research has shown that 80% of a successful disaster relief effort is in the logistics. Only about 25 percent of agencies surveyed immediately after the 2004 South Asia tsunami, had systems in place to manage goods and supplies that poured in from over 40 countries," noted Mizushima. "The majority of field logisticians still use spreadsheets or, equally likely, a pencil and paper to manage incoming supplies during and after a disaster. HELIOS makes it easier for humanitarian organizations to manage their supply chains efficiently and effectively, from mobilization to warehousing, which can mean the difference between life and death for thousands of people in need of aid."

The first humanitarian organization to implement HELIOS is World Vision International, now the largest non-governmental organization (NGO) in the world. World Vision International is currently using HELIOS to manage its aid efforts in Somalia and has plans to roll out HELIOS to manage supplies for a variety of humanitarian initiatives underway in Zambia, Uganda, Ghana, South Sudan and other countries.

Oxfam GB, the UK arm of the international humanitarian organization, after undertaking a comprehensive internal review of its technology needs around the world, has also chosen to do a pilot implementation of HELIOS in Africa and Southeast Asia. Of particular significance is that Oxfam is looking at HELIOS in the context of efforts to strengthen capacity of dozens of local aid organizations that serve as on-the-ground partners providing aid to end beneficiaries. Additional leading aid organizations, to be announced in 2008, are

currently considering use of the software.

The HELIOS project has received substantial financial and technical support from leading corporations such as Abbott Labs, Applied Materials, Hewlett Packard, Intel Corporation, Microsoft Corporation, Levi Strauss and Co., and KPMG International. Intel Corporation will provide strategic and technical guidance to the project on long-range functionality, adoption and sustainability. Fritz Institute welcomes additional partners and donors to help support continued software development and implementations of HELIOS around the world.

Like Fritz Institute founder Lynn Fritz, who achieved significant business success before selling his worldwide shipping logistics company to UPS in 2001, Fritz Institute Chief Logistics Officer Mizushima, formerly vice president for shipping giant American President Lines, has devoted her post-"retirement" years to bringing the efficiencies of the private

sector to the world's humanitarian relief organizations.

"After disasters, well-meaning citizens and corporations make generous donations of food, water, clothing, and medical supplies, but all too often those items don't reach the people who need them because of the tremendous distribution and coordination challenges," said Lynn Fritz. "Working hand-in-hand with relief organizations, Mich has incorporated the best practices of the private sector into the development of HELIOS. We believe HELIOS represents a great leap forward in Fritz Institute's long-term goal of improving efficiency and saving lives, and we are very pleased now to be making HELIOS available on a worldwide scale."

HELIOS is the next-generation of Fritz Institute's Humanitarian Logistics Software (HLS), developed in partnership with the International Federation of Red Cross Red Crescent Societies (IFRC). Fully implemented in 2004, HLS has itself had a

dramatic effect on increasing relief supply efficiency: comparing data from the 2004 South Asia tsunami to data from the 2006 Jakarta earthquake and tsunami, supply-chain set-up times decreased from 18 days to three days, while the cost to deliver aid per family declined from \$800 to \$142.

About Fritz Institute

Fritz Institute is a non-profit organization that works in partnership with governments, non-profit organizations and corporations around the world to innovate solutions and facilitate the adoption of best practices for rapid and effective disaster response and recovery. Fritz Institute was founded in 2001 by Mr. Lynn Fritz, a social entrepreneur and philanthropist, who recognized that effective

front-line humanitarian operations must be supported by strong back-room capabilities: effective operational processes, appropriate uses of enabling technologies, well-trained logistics personnel, objective performance metrics, and institutionalized learning.

Fritz Institute programs include: Certification in Humanitarian Logistics, a ground-breaking training program that establishes a set of professional standards for an international force of largely unaffiliated relief workers and creates a community of logisticians working from common protocols; HELIOS supply chain management platform, the only software of its kind built by and in partnership with humanitarian organizations to manage

the complex demands of immediate relief as well as long-term reconstruction operations; Capacity Building program to establish regional standards of excellence for local aid organizations; the New Partnership of African Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (NEPARC), a partnership of 20 Africa-based relief organizations to systematically build capacity for excellence in disaster relief delivery; and the Bay Area Preparedness Initiative, which has brought together local government, corporate, philanthropic and nonprofit leaders in a unique collaborative and ambitious effort to improve the capability of the San Francisco Bay Area to prepare and respond to a large-scale disaster.