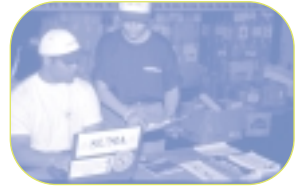




THE WHO/PAHO SUPPLY MANAGEMENT SYSTEM



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The Humanitarian Supply Management System

INTRODUCTION

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The massive influx of donations that pours into a disaster-stricken country often overwhelms national authorities, causing logistical and management problems. Whether local or foreign in origin, much of the aid that arrives is neither requested nor appropriate for current needs.

SUMA is a computerized supply management system that attempts to make order of the chaos often caused by uncoordinated humanitarian relief. The system initially targeted health-related supplies in the aftermath of a disaster. At the urging of most Latin American countries, the scope of SUMA was broadened to include all relief items.

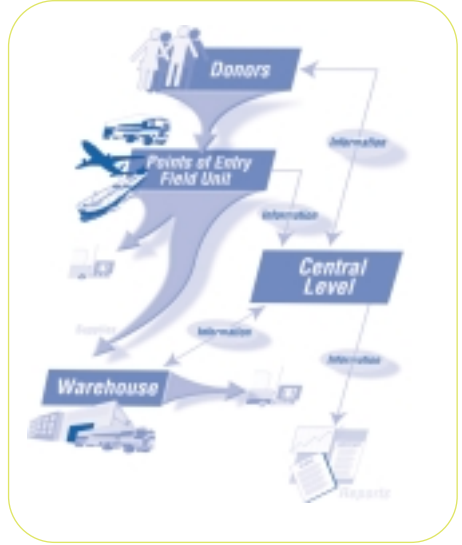


SUMA has more than 2,500 trained volunteers around the world, an integrated logistics course (MISE), and is included in the curriculum of several universities.

SUMA formally started operations in 1992 with the financial support of the Government of the Netherlands.

WHAT DOES SUMA DO?

- Identifies, sorts and classifies incoming humanitarian aid
- Prioritizes supplies based on the needs of the affected population
- Provides a “snapshot” of the flow of donations and the gaps that still exist
- Enables the preparation of reports and information sharing among humanitarian organizations



FROM AN INFORMATION MANAGEMENT TOOL TO A SYMBOL OF TRANSPARENCY

Nearly 10 years after it was first used, SUMA has proven its value as a technical information management and coordination tool in small and large-scale disasters in Latin America and the Caribbean. Recently, SUMA has been used out of national concern for transparency in dealing with humanitarian supplies.

No longer simply an operational tool, SUMA has evolved into an indicator of and tool to enhance transparency and accountability in the aftermath of disasters.

In 1999, the Governing Bodies of PAHO endorsed the systematic use of SUMA in all disasters. (Resolution CE124.R2).

In 2000, the ministries of foreign affairs and national disaster organizations of Central America and the Caribbean formalized their commitment to SUMA by incorporating SUMA methodologies into disaster coordination manuals and embassy guidelines.

TRAINING ACTIVITIES

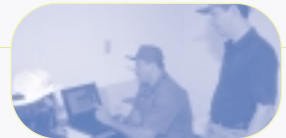
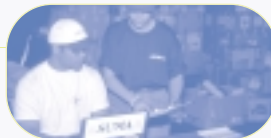
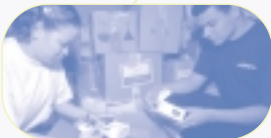
Since SUMA was first used in the early 1990s, more than 2,500 people have been formally trained in the use of the software and the logistics involved in managing humanitarian supplies.

National SUMA teams are made up of trained operators from the ranks of health agencies, civil defense or emergency committees, armed forces, ministries of foreign affairs, customs departments, the Red Cross, NGOs, and other organizations.

The SUMA training program has two main components:

- Use of SUMA Software
- Integrated Management of Emergency Supplies (MISE)

The MISE course just extends the knowledge of SUMA teams beyond familiarity with the SUMA software. It provides training in basic logistical planning procedures including acquisition, transportation, storage and distribution of emergency supplies and evaluation of the process.



AN NGO FOR SUPPLY MANAGEMENT: *FUNDESUMA*

FUNDESUMA, a non-profit, non-governmental organization, was created in 1996, under Costa Rican law, to support, promote, and develop the SUMA methodology. Working on a contractual basis with PAHO and other agencies, FUNDESUMA:

- *provides technical and operational support*
- *provides training in Latin America, the Caribbean, and globally*
- *maintains and upgrades SUMA software*

This new approach of relying on an NGO exclusively dedicated to the integrated management of emergency supplies cuts response time and improves the ability to adapt SUMA to different scenarios.

SUMA IN CYBERSPACE

SUMA training materials are available free of charge, via the Internet.

The SUMA e-mail discussion list disseminates information to interested disaster professionals around the world. Subscription to this list is available on the website.

For the latest information on the SUMA system, including software updates, manuals and teaching materials, please visit:

<http://www.disaster.info.desastres.net/SUMA>

WWW.DISASTER.INFO.DESASTRES.NET/SUMA

SUMA IN ACTION

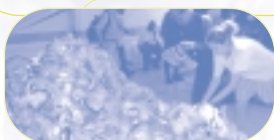


SUMA has been activated in natural disasters such as volcanic eruptions (Ecuador, 2000), floods (Venezuela, 1999), earthquakes (El Salvador, 2001), as well as complex disasters (East Timor (1999).

Hurricanes Mitch and Georges in 1998 were a turning point for SUMA. These disasters mobilized 30 regional volunteers, increased solidarity among countries, and were key to transforming SUMA from a technical management to a political accountability tool.

In addition to offering SUMA courses in countries outside the Americas including Afghanistan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, France, India, Japan, Rwanda, and the United Kingdom, SUMA experts were sent to several complex disaster situations around the world. A good example of such an operation was in East Timor.

Although initially intended for use in disaster situations, SUMA is increasingly being used for activities unrelated to humanitarian assistance, such as warehouse management and inventory tracking. This daily use of SUMA, with the consequent improvements to the System, helps make it a more powerful and effective tool for use in both disasters and complex emergencies, and thus contributes to its sustainability.



THE FUTURE OF SUMA

In October 2000, a meeting of selected users and designers was held in Costa Rica. Representatives of international organizations such as UNICEF, the World Food Programme, the U.N. Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, World Health Organization, International Committee of the Red Cross, and Médecins sans Frontières, together with seasoned users of the SUMA System, reached consensus on several main points:

- 1) *SUMA's relevance in natural as well as complex disasters*
- 2) *SUMA's potential for non-disaster uses as an entry-level inventory management system in health facilities and other organizations that cannot afford sophisticated commercial systems*
- 3) *The need to incorporate new technologies and to improve the software compatibility with various platforms and other systems*
- 4) *The need for collective, interagency ownership of SUMA and for its implementation as part of a coordination mechanism at the global level*

