

3.1.3 Response

Latin America

Effectiveness of Proper Emergency Supply Management System (SUMA)

1. Introduction

Effective and Coordinated Emergency Supply not only reduces the impact of disasters in terms of human suffering but also contributes meaningfully to the Rehabilitation/Reconstruction phase of disaster response. The Emergency Supply Management system known as SUMA began formal operations from this perspective in 1992. It was developed in a cooperative fashion with the participation of experts from various Latin American countries, with the support of the Pan American Health Organization, the Regional Office for the Americas of the World Health Organization (PAHO/WHO), the Colombian Red Cross, and financial support from the Government of the Netherlands. The system was designed for the administration of information regarding the entry of health and medical supplies into a country affected by a disaster. Later, SUMA was modified to serve as a management tool for all types of supplies, not only those related to disasters.

Over a period of several years, SUMA has demonstrated its value as a technical tool for the coordination and management of information following both large-scale and small-scale disasters in Latin America and the Caribbean. But SUMA is not merely a simple operational tool. Since its early days, it has evolved into both an indicator and a tool to assure transparency and encourage responsibility during the aftermath of disasters.

2. Functions of SUMA

- Identifies, selects, and classifies humanitarian aid as it arrives.
- Helps to establish priorities regarding supplies, based on the needs of the affected population.
- Provides a "snapshot" of the flow of donations and of remaining needs.
- Facilitates the preparation of reports and other types of news that can be exchanged among humanitarian groups.

3. SUMA's Objective

SUMA's objective is to prevent relief supply management inefficiencies by promoting a systematic approach involving trained staff, sound classification procedures, and a user-friendly, flexible information technology mechanism to ensure that incoming supplies are properly sorted, inventoried, and prioritized at their point of entry. The following steps are taken to maximize supply allocation effectiveness.

- Trained health staff sort and classify supplies as they arrive.
- Labels are attached to the incoming boxes and/or packages with the following information:
 - a) Distribution priority.
 - b) Whether the consignment contains health care items, including drugs and other medical supplies.
 - c) Whether items need refrigeration.
- An inventory is kept of the valuable items that arrive, based on technical and operational criteria.
- Donations are registered at the point of entry using a computerized system.
- National authorities receive daily reports detailing the name of the donors, the recipients, and the type of supplies provided, etc.
- The country's efficiency is demonstrated by the use of advanced technology.
- Visitors obtain a favorable impression of emergency management efforts.
- Donors are sent an immediate confirmation via fax or e-mail as soon as the supplies have reached their intended recipient.

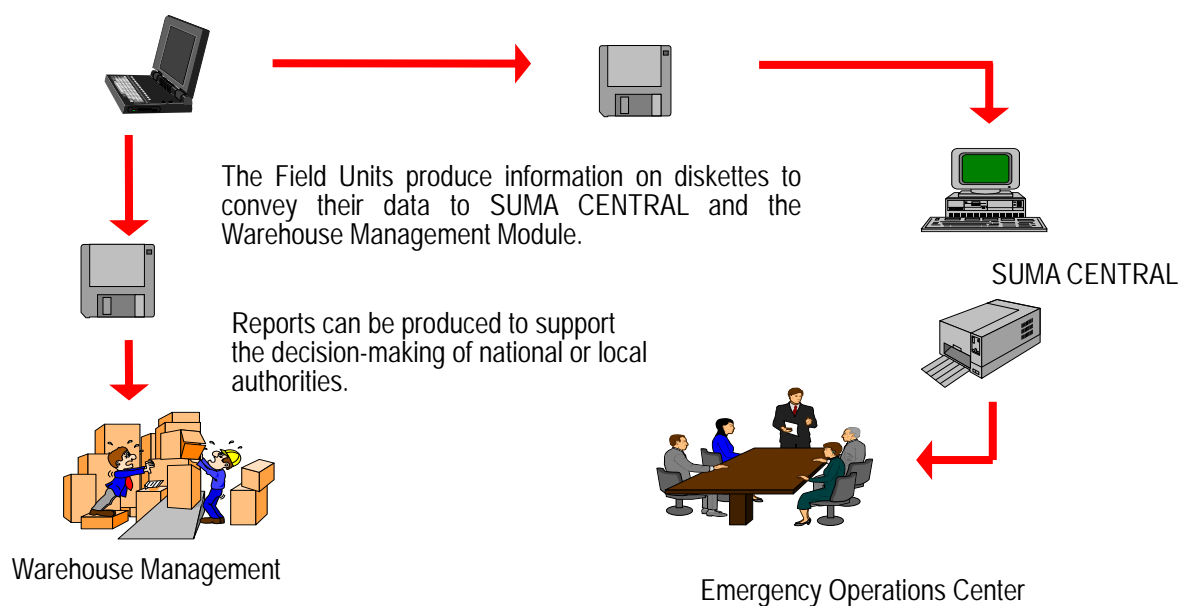
4. System Components

The system has three levels:

- SUMA CENTRAL
- Field Units
- Warehouse Management

SUMA CENTRAL is designed to operate at emergency management headquarters, i.e., the facilities where national authorities are managing a disaster or emergency. Field Units are designed to work at the points of entry (e.g., borders, ports), and at local collection centers where supplies arrive during an emergency, such as airports, collection sites, etc. The Warehouse Management Module is a tool that registers the arrival of supplies at storage centers or warehouses and their departure for distribution. These warehouses receive supplies as well as electronic tracking information sent by the Field Units or SUMA CENTRAL. In this way, institutions can coordinate the internal management of relief supplies or their distribution to other facilities or organizations involved in disaster relief efforts.

The following chart provides a functional vision of the system



- Background

Effective and coordinated emergency supply reduces the impact of disasters in terms of human sufferings as well as contributing to the rehabilitation/reconstruction phase of disaster response.

- Objective

Development and spread of an effective supply management system (SUMA).

- Term/Time Frame

Development of SUMA in 1992.

- Activities Undertaken

Training program for local government officials to implement SUMA in 2003.

- Major Achievements

Well organized logistics for distributing emergency supplies

- Contact Details

Pan American Health Organization, Regional Office for the Americas of the World Health Organization (PAHO/WHO) / WHO West Pacific Regional Office (WPRO)