Implementing the SUMA System in NGOs in Haiti

Introduction

SUMA is software that increases transparency in managing humanitarian supplies. Implementing the SUMA system in an emergency facilitates the preparation of reports that can then be shared with donors, authorities in the affected country, humanitarian agencies, the media, and others. SUMA is not a system for tracking supplies from their delivery by the donor to their receipt by the end user.

SUMA provides national authorities, United Nations agencies, and other coordinating bodies with a general view of what has been pledged and what has reached a country during a particular emergency. Many humanitarian agencies already have their own supply tracking systems. SUMA complements these systems.

What information is needed from an NGO?

Given what is being planned for the operation to combat the cholera outbreak, it would be extremely useful for NGOs handling supplies in the country to implement SUMA to monitor their inventories. At the same time, it would facilitate the consolidation of information, since the NGOs could share information about their inventories.

The following information is needed about the supplies that they have received or brought into the country since 21 October:

- Donor or origin
- Cargo's date of entry
- Description of the items with:
    o Name of the item
    o Quantity
    o Unit of presentation
    o Weight
    o Expiration date

If they provide this information, it could included in the consolidated information on all supplies received in the country for the cholera outbreak. Work to consolidate the information will be done in conjunction with the Department of Civil Defense (DPC).

What would be the advantages to an NGO that implements SUMA?

Implementing SUMA in an NGO is a very simple process. Staff can normally be trained in a day. A special list of the key items that are most important for dealing with the cholera outbreak has been drawn up. This list is uploaded when the software is installed. This means that, from the outset, the NGO staff that use the system work with the definitions already created.

The SUMA system is designed to manage humanitarian assistance and has all the stock management functions. Thanks to this system, one can rapidly find out how many units of a particular item are in stock or obtain information about the inventory in general, how much there is, how much has been received, and the distribution, either overall or broken down by beneficiary or department.
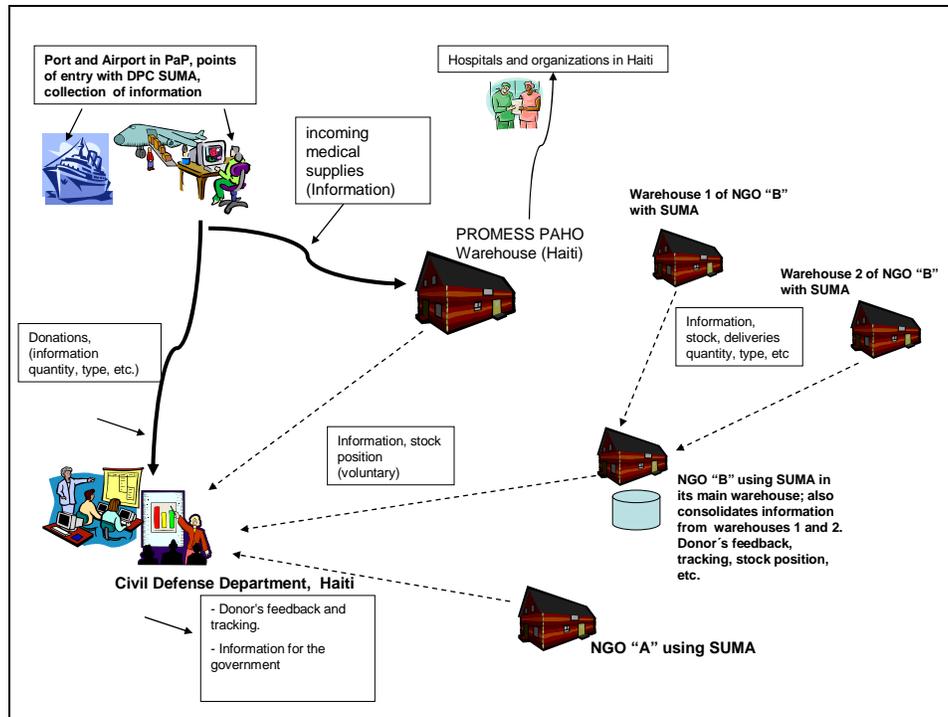
The system has different types of summary reports. It also has reports for monitoring a specific donation, as well as feedback reports. The system is very flexible in terms of how the inventory can be organized in a warehouse; one can focus on the general inventory or projects, budget lines, or donors.

One advantage of the system is the speed with which it can produce information in different formats. All reports can be exported to Excel, PDF or HTML, enabling the NGO that uses it to share its information or report it to an office or government agency within minutes.

The SUMA system also has functions for sharing information. Thus, an NGO that uses it can very simply and safely share its stock position with its other entities or warehouses that use SUMA or with a center that consolidates the information. In the case of Haiti, that would be the DPC, under the current plans, will consolidate the general information on what is received and distributed in the country. Logically, the inventory sharing is voluntary.

Managing Information with SUMA

The figure below shows how an NGO can integrate SUMA into its logistical structure and use it to consolidate information from all its warehouses; for this process, SUMA has automatic functions that are both safe and rapid.

The SUMA system is provided free-of-charge to all organizations wishing to use it.

Contact Information

The contacts for help in implementing the SUMA system are:

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References

- LSS/SUMA project home page.
- Health Cluster website.
- Pan American Health Organization.
- World Health Organization.