



# GUIDELINES FOR HEALTH LOGISTICS MANAGEMENT IN EMERGENCY SITUATION

MAKING A DIFFERENCE TO VULNERABILITY

February 1999

WORLD HEALTH ORGANISATION  
1999

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Acknowledgements: this is a compilation based on personal experiences, others experience and a large consulting on related bibliography. Thanks to Dr. Edgardo Acosta Nassar, Executive Director of Fundesuma and Mr. Alvaro Montero Sanchez, freelance Disaster Consultant whose input and support has been helpful to achieve these guidelines.

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## **Preface**

Despite the long experience already accumulated on prevention, preparedness and disaster's response in most of the disaster prone countries, there are aspects that still need further efforts to optimise the access of the affected population to the humanitarian assistance in a disaster situation. This means a qualitative improvement on the logistic capabilities of the organisations managing the emergency's actions.

A recurrent nightmare on every new emergency is the acquisition, management and distribution of the supplies intended to relief the needs of the damaged population, not only those coming from the humanitarian donations but also those locally acquired.

The fast saturation of the supplies' access points is easily worsened by the lack of a flow strategy for those materials. There are losses on deteriorated products, either because inadequate transport or storage, expiring or, even worst, because the material can not be sent, or it is sent too late to the field where it is needed.

Nowadays it is understood that the best help on a disaster situation is that intended to be helpful to a faster recovery of the affected area and population, such as construction materials, seeds and agricultural tools. Nevertheless, because a disaster is a sudden interruption of the normal living of the community, they would need some basic help to support their survival, recovery and a faster return to their normality.

The SUMA system, originally developed by the Pan-American Health Organisation, the Latin American and the Caribbean countries, brings a useful tool to manage and control the information about supplies in disaster situations. However, the countries still need to define procedures and to train their emergency staff on proper techniques to acquire, store, transport and distribute the costly emergency relief resources and to evaluate the whole operation.

In these guidelines is broached the issue of the Health Logistics Management which main components are supplying, transport, warehousing and distribution. These components needs to be understood on a fully integrated process involving the planning of actions prior to disasters, the co-ordination with other relevant local and international actors on relief activities, as well as the monitoring, control and evaluation of the whole process.

The present guidelines are mainly targeting the regional emergency focal points and the national or provincial emergency co-ordinators. Input from those responsible for implementing emergency preparedness programs will be used to validate the applicability and usefulness of these guidelines. This review will be conducted on a yearly basis in all regions.

We acknowledge with gratitude the generous financial support of the UK Department for International Development in the production of these guidelines, which are a milestone in the progress of countries towards self-sufficiency and dignity in the face of emergencies.

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## **1. Planning the Health Logistic Management in emergency**

To have an adequate response to cope with emergency situation it is necessary a good prior planning process. Disasters are different from one to another but their scenarios are the same or very similar. That is why forecasting the needs and planning the response are quite possible. Knowing the probabilities for a disaster or big emergencies to happen in the country or region, some activities should be done on normal times to ensure a good level of preparedness:

### **1.1. Risks and threats**

Identifying and monitoring risks and threats that could lead to an emergency or disaster in the country, either sudden or slow-onset, natural (seismic, volcanic activity, hurricanes, floods, drought...) or human made (political tension, displaced population, civilian disturbances, epidemics...). Normally this is already done by the national organisations in charges of disasters management where they exist, so in these cases the contact with these organisation would be very useful to know the disasters potential of the country. A larger view at this respect can be obtained on the "Health Sector Emergency Preparedness Guide" issued by WHO<sup>1</sup>

### **1.2. Resources Inventory**

Making previous identification and inventories of resources and useful contacts. A survey on availability of key persons, material, equipment, services and means should be done, in terms of what can be found locally, where we can find it and with whom we have to co-ordinate to get it. This inventory should be reviewed regularly to keep it up to date. This also would help to determine what items are locally available and what should be brought from abroad. It is important to determine the availability of specific items in neighbouring countries, as well.

### **1.3. Getting to know the country**

Identifying routes and ways to reach the areas of the country and appropriate resources for transport, procurement and warehousing at the central but also at local level. Meeting local or international organisations (governmental and non-governmental) and keeping good, close and frequent contact to share information about the country.

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<sup>1</sup> *Health Sector Emergency Preparedness Guide*. Emergency and Humanitarian Action Department. Emergency Preparedness Program. World Health Organization. Geneva, Octobre 1998.

#### **1.4. National policies**

Identifying and understanding national procedures and formalities; is convenient to take time to know the functioning of certain national systems, specially those related to our emergency activities and concerns, as well as customs and legal procedures.

#### **1.5. Prior agreements**

Getting prior agreements with local authorities and other organisations about actions and co-operation in disaster situation; building or getting inside of co-ordination and co-operation networks. This means to identify suitable partners at central and at local level, as well. A good contact with local key authorities, such as National Emergency Committees, ministries of Health, foreign affairs, customs, etc., should be established looking for previous agreements that facilitate actions at emergencies situation, especially in terms of procedures and formalities.

#### **1.6. Local expertise/operational staff**

Sometimes having local view and expertise can facilitate the access to difficult areas and the pertinence of actions. Local ONGs, Red Cross, Universities and such organisations could be pertinent places to look for qualified staff. This should be considerate accordingly with the circumstances.

#### **1.7. When a disaster strikes**

Every emergency intervention needs to have its own operational objectives in order to provide indicators that allow measuring up the accomplishing of our institutional goals. This will also helps to re-orient the actions to enlarge or specialise the scope and to prevent from deviations.

A regular up dating on inventories and contacts should be made. However, when a sudden event occurs, a fast check should be done to determine whether the resources previously identified have not been affected and are available still.

## **2. Co-ordination of actions on relief supply activities**

Any activities or actions must have in mind the co-ordination component. There are two main instances for co-ordination:

### **2.1. Co-ordination at the planning phase:**

Getting a clear picture of whom is who, and who does what on the humanitarian context acting in the country is very important. But first of all, we must clearly define the role we intend to play, the field where we can efficiently intervene and the activities that we are able to set up, accordingly with our mandate and resources. Taking part or even organising regular meetings with other international and/or national agencies about preparedness and planning actions for disaster situations are key activities. All this would help to have a prior identification of intervention fields, to define joint actions, share responsibilities and as result, to have a clearest panorama when a disaster strikes.

### **2.2. Co-ordination for response actions**

It is important not to duplicate actions and to try to get a maximal yield; it is why a close, continuous and direct contact with other national and international partners must be kept. Activities such as joint field assessments, sharing reports and working and feedback meetings, are highly recommended. Normally, the government is the one in charge of co-ordinating the national response and relief activities, so we must take it into consideration when acting on emergencies. In the context of a disaster situation is frequent the emerging of co-ordination instances that gather various organisations and ad hoc arrangements can be agreed. Any action should be co-ordinated with other acting UN agencies