

In Haiti, helping PROMESS regain its footing after the earthquake

As emergency relief supplies began to arrive in Haiti, PROMESS' systems were unable to manage the large volume of medical commodities that arrived. Seven local and international organizations mobilized to help the medical stores regroup after the earthquake. After four weeks of support, PROMESS was standing on its own.

On January 12, 2010, a massive earthquake shook Haiti, leaving a devastated population in need of medical care and supplies.

The earthquake had not spared PROMESS, the central medical stores for the government of Haiti managed on behalf of the Haitian Ministry of Health by the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO). The steel superstructure and roof of the PROMESS warehouse remained intact, but the cement block walls of the main warehouse had toppled into the courtyard and perimeter of the PROMESS site, leaving the entire warehouse open to the elements.

As emergency relief supplies began to arrive in Haiti, PROMESS' systems were unable to manage the large volume of medical commodities that arrived almost at random at their front door. At the same time, the massive increase in demand for drugs and medical supplies to support medical relief efforts was far in excess of the capacity of PROMESS to manage effectively. Existing systems broke down as staff struggled to react to the catastrophe, and PROMESS became a bottleneck in the national supply chain that aimed to receive, store and re-distribute essential commodities to clients.

PAHO, the US Embassy, the US Department of Health and Human Services, USAID, the Clinton Foundation and others launched a major collaborative effort to assist PROMESS manage its way out of the crisis. In turn, USAID asked SCMS to mobilize a team of supply chain experts to assist PROMESS by assessing the status of its operations and proposing how to help the organization develop more effective systems for emergency response and more long-term operations. The team included staff from SCMS, USAID | DELIVER PROJECT, MSH (Management Science for Health) and MAP International.

Working closely with existing SCMS staff in Haiti, the team conducted its assessment by interviewing staff, observing warehouse functions and reviewing documents related to PROMESS operations.

Thirty-three sea freight containers of USAID emergency supplies and kits sat in the PROMESS complex waiting to be unpacked, inventoried and distributed to health facilities and relief organizations. The team and PROMESS staff agreed on their top priorities:

- Rapidly re-rack, reorganize and decongest the warehouse of non-essential commodities to make way for incoming emergency medical supplies.
- Inventory, organize and pack supplies for delivery to clinics and hospitals.

- Improve the area behind PROMESS where containers were stored by leveling it and adding gravel to prevent the containers from flooding during the imminent rainy season.

Coordinating resources with PROMESS and through contacts at USAID and the US Embassy, a multi-donor and multidisciplinary effort was put in motion to rapidly improve the physical state of the PROMESS site. PROMESS contracted a company to remove debris, level and grade the area, while SCMS provided the labor to reorganize the commodities in the containers, and to decongest and reorganize the main warehouse. The US Army assisted with the reconstruction of the exterior walls, provided a fork lift truck to re-site the containers as the area was graded, and provided round-the-clock perimeter security to prevent theft.

Within a week, both the warehouse and the site behind PROMESS were transformed.



Figure 1 Collapsed wall in rear of PROMESS warehouse, February 2, 2010



Figure 2 Partial view of restored wall of PROMESS warehouse, March 3, 2010



Figure 3 PROMESS Warehouse A, with aisles blocked by boxes, February 2, 2010.



Figure 4 Reorganized PROMESS Warehouse A, February 17, 2010.

In the first week, the team prepared a detailed assessment and proposal for incremental changes to existing emergency procedures at PROMESS that were designed to assist the institution to

regain its footing. The next week PROMESS's senior management agreed to the recommendations and a plan for implementation of three key initiatives:

1. **Regain control of inventory management.** PROMESS had lost management control of its inventory. Both the locations and quantities of commodities were out of date in the IT systems. SCMS recommended mapping all available pallet locations, identifying the location of commodities in these locations, and conducting cycle counts to quickly document inventory. Counting was done at night so that the daily operations of PROMESS could continue without interruption. SCMS assisted with the location and commodity mapping efforts, partnering with a team of logistical experts with the US Army who helped with nightly cycle counts under PROMESS and SCMS supervision.
2. **Establish control of commodity donations.** Large donations of relief supplies were arriving at the PROMESS site, often unannounced and without adequate documentation, and without any clear plan for their reception, storage and distribution. Management of these donations was virtually impossible. SCMS recommended the rapid implementation of a strategy for controlling the inventory of incoming commodities at the airport and seaport, thereby helping PROMESS to be prepared to either rapidly receive and distribute them, organize direct delivery from the port of arrival to beneficiaries, or, when appropriate, reject and destroy expired goods that had been delivered in error and could not be used. On the advice of PROMESS, SCMS sub-contracted Pharmaciens Aide Humanitaire (PAH), a French NGO that was prepared to help with this effort and had access to local pharmacists with the necessary skills.
3. **Relocate non-essential commodities.** The PROMESS warehouses were congested with excessive quantities of bulk commodities such as condoms, mosquito nets and syringes that were not in immediate demand and needed to be relocated to make space for the pharmaceuticals and medical supplies urgently needed for emergency care. Partnering with PROMESS, SCMS sub-contracted laborers through a local company to accomplish this activity.

Consultant pharmacists and logisticians from PAH and the Clinton Foundation mobilized to conduct the mapping and labeling of pallet spaces in the PROMESS warehouses. SCMS developed the cycle count protocols, and the team from the US Army conducted them beginning at 5pm each day. Once the nightly cycle counts were completed and validated, the team prepared a spreadsheet file that contained the inventory details for the commodities that had been inventoried the night before. SCMS



Figure 5 US Army Logistics Team at PROMESS

then passed the data to the consultants from PAHO and the Clinton Foundation who updated them in PROMESS' IT system prior to opening for business the following morning. By March 2 PROMESS once again had full control of its inventory.

The control of inbound commodity donations began on February 15 at the Port au Prince airport where a large number of pallets of emergency medical supplies from the US Department of Health and Human Services sat in storage adjacent to the airport runway. SCMS subcontracted with PAH to rapidly inventory the supplies, and SCMS and USAID prepared a distribution plan for health facilities supported by the US Government.



Figure 6 PAH and USAID staff inventory HSS commodities at Airport

Fourteen health facilities then came to the airport to collect supplies that had been allocated to them. The remaining commodities went to the PROMESS site, where PAH updated the inventory. SCMS and the US Army team then packed them into containers for safe and secure storage, ready for rapid distribution to health facilities.

PROMESS acquired and erected a tent for the safe, temporary storage of non-essential commodities removed earlier from the warehouse.

This entire effort relied upon the successful coordination and mobilization of human, material and financial resources across seven international and local organizations, including PAHO, PROMESS, USAID, US Embassy, US Army, SCMS, PAH and the Clinton Foundation. Within four weeks of the start of the effort, PROMESS resumed almost normal operations.