



**THE ROLE OF MONITORING AND EVALUATION IN OFFERING
STRATEGIC DIRECTION DURING CRISIS**

**A PAPER PRESENTED VIRTUALLY DURING THE 9TH MONITORING
AND EVALUATION WEEK ON THE 18TH MAY 2021**

By

DR SAMSON M. MACHUKA

MONITORING AND EVALUATION SPECIALIST

What Is Monitoring and Evaluation

❖ Monitoring and evaluation (M&E) involves setting up systems to consistently review how the communication response is progressing, what needs to be improved and whether the program goals are being met.

Monitoring *Continues..*

❖ **Monitoring** is a continuous process that entails the regular collection and analysis of data to assist timely decision making, check whether activities are being executed according to plan, ensure accountability and provide the basis for evaluation and learning.

Evaluation *Continues..*

❖ **Evaluation** assesses the degree of success obtained and determines to what extent the anticipated outcomes are produced. It measures whether the behavioral communication objectives have been achieved through specific intervention activities. Evaluation also provides insights into lessons learned and promising practices.

Why is M&E Important in a crisis

Through M&E it is possible to review how the intervention is progressing, recognize risks and challenges as they develop, and adjust the implementation strategy as necessary to achieve the program goal. In particular, M&E allows you to:

continues

- Track progress of activities against indicators
- Adapt the strategy as needed against program goals and objectives
- Provide accountability to the audiences, partners and donors
- Assess the success of communication activities
- Identify lessons learned and best practices
- Inform future emergency communication response

In the initial phases of an emergency, M&E systems should remain light and dynamic due to time and resource constraints. As the emergency progresses, more formal M&E systems need to be established. The table below highlights some essential M&E steps in relation to each of the emergency phases.

Pre-Crisis	Preparedness	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Engage partners and stakeholders• Define roles and responsibilities in case of an emergency• Define reporting structures and feedback loops• Determine basic output level indicators that can be used to monitor initial communication response• Establish basic preemptive M&E plan
------------	--------------	--

Initial Crisis	Initial Monitoring	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Conduct systematic collection of output-level data• Conduct monitoring to check quality of communication response• Activate feedback loops• Hold regular review meetings• Communicate results• Make changes to activities as per monitoring results
----------------	--------------------	--

Maintenance	Formal M&E System	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop formal M&E Plan • Conduct systematic collection of output-level data • Conduct monitoring activities to check quality of communication response
Resolution		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review and adjust activities as per monitoring results • Hold regular review meetings • Communicate results and adjustments to activities

Evaluation

Evaluation

- Conduct post-emergency evaluation
- Gather lessons learned and best practices
- Share findings
- Use findings to inform future activities to prevent future crisis

Based on the fact that M&E evolves through a communication response, the following steps are recommended to establish an effective system that allows for the monitoring of activities, informs changes where necessary and assesses progress towards the program goal at the end the emergency:

Steps that can help to limit potential damage in a crisis:

1. Anticipate

The first step is to prepare. Be proactive and arrange an intensive brainstorming session to go through all the potential crises that could occur at an organization or a country for that matter. The simple rule of thumb is to accept Murphy's Law, "What can go wrong, will go wrong." However, not only are some situations preventable by simply modifying processes, but this assessment process should lead to the creation of a crisis response plan.

Steps that can help to limit potential damage in a crisis:

2. Create a plan and test it

The crisis response plan should be tailored for an organization, or a country and it should include both operational and communications components – in a crisis, what will you do and what will you say? In order to ensure the messages contained in the crisis response plan are delivered effectively and with credibility, it needs to be tested. This is where crisis training and simulations come in, as well as media training for those who could be giving statements and interviews. Most importantly, taking these steps will help ensure you can carry out your response plan in a real-life situation, not just in theory.

3. Identify your crisis communication team

A small team of senior executives should be identified to serve as your organization's crisis communications team. Ideally, the CEO will lead the team, with the firm's top public relations executive and legal counsel as his or her chief advisers, after that the size of the team depends on the needs of your business.

This team should set the communications process for your business. Avoid getting caught out when a staff member, who does not know the whole story, gives a quote to the media or posts on their personal social media, because they didn't know what to do (or not to do). Make sure a clear process is created and communicated to your staff, channels can include newsletters, employee handbooks and intranet.

4. Establish notification and monitoring systems

Knowing what's being said about you in traditional and social media, by your employees, customers, and other stakeholders often allows you to catch a negative “trend” that, if unchecked, could turn into a crisis. Likewise, monitoring feedback from stakeholders during a crisis situation allows you to accurately adapt your strategy and tactics. Furthermore, your organisation should have the means to reach the internal and external stakeholders as soon as possible.

5. Communicate, communicate, communicate

The first rule of crisis management is to communicate. Early hours are critical and they set the tone for the duration of the crisis. Be as open as possible; tell what you know and when you became aware of it; explain who is involved and what is being done to fix the situation. Be sure to correct misinformation promptly when it emerges. Remaining silent or appearing removed could enrage the public and other stakeholders.

6. The death of the super injunction

While crisis experts assert that the legal route is still a valid approach to take, from a reputational point of view, it can sometimes do more harm. Taking legal action can be required at times, but be warned it can cause reputational issues if it looks like you have something to hide or if it looks like you're being greedy. Also, be aware that the legal route takes time. Time is not on your side in a crisis.

7. Post-crisis analysis

After a crisis, formal analysis of what was done well, what could be done better next time and how to improve various elements of your crisis response plan. This is another must-do activity for any crisis communications team. As the crisis comes under control, a company should examine how effective their plan was during the crisis and the impact the incident has had on its employees, brand(s) and reputation. If any of those three have taken a hit, a company may need take steps to address them.

Conclusion and Key Steps for M&E in Emergency Communication

- Establish Preparedness Systems for Rapid Activation
- Activate Simple M&E Systems for Early Monitoring
- Develop and Implement M&E Plan
- Conduct a Post-Emergency Evaluation

THE END
THANK YOU ALL