Situational Reports (Sitreps)

Overview

Situation Reports (sitreps) are an essential tool in humanitarian response. Sitreps can either be internal - designed to provide the organization with updates that will help IOM understand how best to improve or further support the response - or external - designed for external audiences, providing an overview of the situation and updates on IOM's response activities.

Sitreps are developed by the country office, with support from the regional office and headquarters as necessary.

Description

Internal Sitreps

At the onset of an emergency, internal situation reports are required. These reports help the regional office, headquarters and other missions supporting the emergency, understand the context of the situation and the progress of the response.

The frequency of producing the reports is decided by the country office in coordination with the regional office and headquarters.

Having an internal sitrep that consolidates all the country office's activities and progress in the response not only helps the regional office and headquarters provide effective support to the country office, it also makes developing donor reports and external sitreps much easier. In addition to this, the IASC Emergency Directors Group, may convene to discuss strategic and operational issues concerning a specific response. The Director of the Department of Operations and Emergencies (DOE) is a part of this group and information from internal sitreps can be used to highlight challenges faced by the country office/s as necessary.

Gathering the information necessary to develop an internal sitrep can require input from several operations staff within the country office. It is important to develop a clear reporting process within the mission. Identifying who is responsible for providing updates and who is responsible for consolidating and releasing the sitrep.

Two templates are available in the Tools and Reference section to assist in gathering and consolidating information for the internal sitreps:

1. Internal Sitrep Information Gathering Template: This template has been developed to help guide country office in gathering and consolidating the information needed for an internal sitrep. This is the template that can be provided to programme managers or operations staff to gather information needed for the internal sitrep. Using this template helps guide the staff that are required to provide information to understand what information in needed.

2. Internal Sitrep Template: This template has been developed to help consolidate all information gathered within a country office. It includes all the sections that would be relevant for Regional offices and headquarters to better understand the situation, achievements and challenges faced by a country office.

These templates should be adjusted to meet the existing needs and capacities of the country office.

- Remember your audience. The regional office and headquarters may not be as familiar with the context and additional explanation on how activities link to broader IOM and inter-agency strategies in country would be helpful.
- Avoid reporting about meetings attended and focus more on the achievements that resulted from meetings.
- Check figures. Ensure that numbers within the report add up as appropriate. Compare what was reported in the previous period to ensure that what is reported in the current period does not contradict what was reported in the past.
- Avoid repeating achievements that were already reported in previous sitreps.
- Do not hesitate to include information on the challenges faced by the country office in implementing activities, this information is helpful giving the regional office and headquarters a better idea of the difficulties faced by the country office in achieving desired outcomes and will enable them to provide better support.

External Sitreps

External Sitreps are one of the main products used by the country office, regional office, headquarters and missions with resource mobilization functions to update stakeholders on IOM's response to a crisis. Like the internal sitrep, the frequency of producing the reports is decided by the country office in coordination with the regional office and headquarters.

- Information to produce the external sitrep should be taken from the internal sitrep. There is no need to create a separate system to gather information for the external sitrep.
- Information on the external sitrep should be results based and should demonstrate how IOM's emergency programmes contribute to the priorities of the overall humanitarian response.

Depending on the capacity of the country office, external sitreps can be developed at the country level. In cases where the external sitrep cannot be developed by the country office, headquarters, namely the Donor Relations Division (DRD), and the Preparedness and Response Division (PRD) and the regional office can support in the development and dissemination of the external sitrep.

Prior to release, external sitreps must be endorsed by DRD in coordination with PRD. External sitreps are shared at the country, regional and headquarters level. DRD shares regular updates (sitreps, newsletters and other IOM products) with all donors in Geneva and with the IOM network of donor focal points (IOM offices in donor capitals).

External sitreps are made available on the IOM website and IOM country office websites.

Key Considerations

Information on the external sitrep should be results based and should demonstrate how IOM's emergency programmes contribute to the priorities of the overall humanitarian response.

While the external sitrep is disseminated by DRD at the global level, country office should also share the document with their donor counterparts locally as well as with other key stakeholders as part of their public information activities and overall communications strategy. In addition, it is recommended the country office maintain a mailing list that can be used to regularly share this information by email. The Media Contact list template, in the Public Information in Emergencies entry can be adapted for this purpose.

Links

- Donor Relations Division page on IOM Intranet

Contacts

For more information and guidance contact the Donor Relations Division (DRD): drd@iom.int.

The Preparedness and Response Division (PRD): prdcore@iom.int or the DOE RTS in your region.

References and Tools

- IOM External Sitrep Template
- Template to gather info for internal sitrep
- IOM House Style Manual

Other Entries in this Topic

- Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) in Emergencies

Document date

Document last updated: Jul 2023

Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) in Emergencies

Overview

Monitoring and evaluation (M&E) are two important management processes that enable project staff to track progress and facilitate effective decision making. Although donors require IOM to integrate M&E systems into projects to account for the utilization of resources they provided, the greatest beneficiaries of effective M&E are the target population. By closely observing project activities and understanding its impact in the community, adjustments can be made to ensure that project design and activities are relevant, effective, efficient, and yield meaningful results for the community.

Description

What is Monitoring?

Monitoring can be defined as "a continuing function that uses systematic collection of data on specified indicators to provide management and the main stakeholders of an ongoing development intervention with indications of the extent of progress and achievement of objectives and progress in the use of allocated funds".[1] It provides feedback to operational planning, costs management and budget use, and facilitates decision-making for remedial actions when necessary. Regular consultations with project partners and beneficiaries are also required for effective monitoring. It measures progress against project objectives, outcomes and outputs. When done properly, information gathered through monitoring can guide project revisions and confirm that aid is reaching the people intended. It can enable decision-makers to respond to community feedback and identify emerging problems and trends. It should gather disaggregated data by age and gender for different groups including persons with specific needs.[2]

Within the cluster system, cluster leads often require partners to provide regular updates on the progress of their response in a measurable and standardized manner. Donors are also putting more and more emphasis on the need to be provided with clear, measurable and results-based updates. Where country-based pooled funds are available, fund managers often allocate M&E focal points to review project activities related to the funds. For more information on this contact the Department of Operations and Emergencies (DOE) Regional Thematic Specialist (RTS) or the M&E focal point in the regional office.

- Do not re-invent the wheel. Global Cluster Standard Indicators exist for emergency operations at the global level and they can be used and if needed, modified to fit the context of the emergency. Cluster leads at the country level often have a set of indicators developed and request that partners monitor their activities using these variables to measure qualitative and quantitative progress. In some cases, donors may also have standard indicators that they would like used in to monitor project activities. Where these exist, use these indicators as project indicators where appropriate.
- To estimate the cost of M&E activities within the budget, consider the costs of measuring indicators with the means of verification available (such as surveys, field visits, assessments etc.). The budget line should also include the costs for conducting an evaluation where appropriate.

Remote Monitoring: In general, IOM presence and proximity to the affected population and beneficiaries are critical to the effectiveness of our programmes. Unfortunately, as a result of security risks towards IOM and other humanitarian and development actors, there will be cases where an operational adjustment must be taken by IOM in the country.

When faced with a complex security environment, the objective for IOM and other actors is not to avoid the risks altogether, but to manage them in a way that would allow us to remain present and effective. Based on programme criticality, this may involve the withdrawal or drastic reduction of the number of staff from the field, and require the country office to remotely manage a programme from a different location than where it is being implemented.

When the situation leads to remote management, the role of M&E can take on greater importance, due to the need to ensure the project is delivered according to plan while IOM staff have limited or no physical presence on site. There are several cases of past and current IOM humanitarian operations where remote management and M&E have been used, including in Iraq, Somalia, Sudan, and Syria.[3] A range of innovative M&E approaches have been developed by IOM and the humanitarian and development community for settings in which access is limited. These can include, but are not limited to:

1. Call centres and regular debriefing meetings with local partners.

2. Community-based methods such as crowd sourcing, broadcasts, complaints boxes, and consulting local communities.

3. Photos and videos of distribution, web-based remote project monitoring, daily verbal reports and peer observations.

4. Use of vetted third-party monitors who may have access to the area of operation.

It is important to keep in mind that each of these approaches has its benefits and drawbacks, and none will be able to fully address the challenges of monitoring operations in a contested and a rapidly changing conflict situation. For further guidance on remote monitoring, it is recommended you get in touch with the Regional M&E Officer.

ECHO has developed specific guidance on remote management in operations. When operating under (partial) remote management, they request specific information to be included in the project proposal, and require quarterly reports on monitoring and aid diversion. For more information or the templates, please contact RO Brussels.

What is Evaluation?

Evaluation is defined as "a systematic and objective assessment of an on-going or completed project, programme or policy, its design, implementation and results. The aim is to determine the relevance and fulfilment of objectives, development efficiency, effectiveness, impact and sustainability".[4]

Evaluations are useful tools for management, accountability, learning and for gathering information to improve interventions. Results of evaluations can also be used as a resource mobilization tool and as a promotion of IOM activities. It also demonstrates IOM's commitment to carry out humanitarian interventions in an effective and transparent manner. In the context of an emergency, evaluations can be conducted to analyze a specific project, programme or even an overall cluster response (including the response of cluster partners). Specific evaluation criteria have been developed for emergencies and their description can be found at IOM's Evaluation webpage.

For Level 3 Emergencies, Real Time Evaluations (RTEs) are mandatory for IOM (see IOM SOPs for L3 Emergencies in the IOM Corporate Emergency Activation entry). RTEs are expected to produce an immediate feedback on the results of the evaluation and contribute to improvements. The RTE team should deliver its report or a substantive early draft, before leaving the field. RTEs are not supposed to be time consuming exercises and their scope should be targeted and planned, taking into consideration the reality in the country office where programme managers may have limited time dedicate to the evaluation process.

In some cases donors include evaluations as a requirement for receiving contributions. This is often stated in the project agreement. In some cases, donors may also opt to carry out evaluations directly. In the event that the donor requires an evaluation to be carried out, it is important to ensure that the relevant costs are included in the project budget and country offices should discuss it with the donor as soon as possible. Various types of evaluations can be proposed (e.g. mid-term, final, RTE, humanitarian or process evaluations etc.) and are designed on a case by case basis to fit the specific requirements of the context.

Key Considerations

Monitoring

Often times, a single sector of intervention for IOM has several donors contributing to similar activities. Where possible, use the same indicators and progress indications for these projects to make it easier to gather data and consolidate the information to see the overall impact of the intervention.

At the country level, internal sitreps are usually developed and shared by the country office with other IOM offices who are supporting the response (e.g. the Regional Office and headquarters). Include project indicators in the templates that are shared with operations staff who are contributing information for the sitrep. This ensures that:

- Sitreps have measurable information on progress, and
- The necessary updates against indicators are gathered regularly and not just before a donor report is due.

Evaluation

- Be sure to read project agreements and project documents to identify whether evaluations are required in the proposal. Given the short timeframe of most emergency projects, it is important to start planning for these activities at the beginning of the project implementation.
- Evaluation reports are available on the IOM Evaluation webpaget. This can be useful resources for seeing other evaluations conducted in the past and can provide ideas when planning your own evaluations.
- Country offices are encouraged to send their evaluations to OIG for recording and uploading onto the evaluation webpage.

Relevance to IOM’s Emergency Operations

In line with the humanitarian community's efforts to improve the performance of the overall response to an emergency, including improving accountability to both the affected population and the donors who support the response, IOM is working to improve its approach to M&E by ensuring that results monitoring frameworks are developed and utilized in emergencies. These frameworks should also include tools that help to use and measure the indicators and serve as an implementation plan for projects, including the planning of an evaluation. Having a result monitoring framework in place also helps the country office produce better information products that contribute to resource mobilization. Products include: external sitreps, fact sheets and annual reports. They also make the development of project reports much easier and improve the overall quality of these reports.

Links

- IOM Project Handbook
- IOM Evaluation Webpage
- IOM Evaluation and Monitoring Portal
- Working with Implementing partners for Remote Management in Syrian Context: "Br…
- The Use of Third Party Monitors in Insecure Contexts

Contacts

Thematic experts are available within IOM to help guide the development of projects. These experts can also provide specific guidance to develop realistic indicators. These thematic experts can be contacted by email:

For Camp Coordination and Camp Management (CCCM): cccmsupport@iom.int

For Shelter and Settlements: sheltersupport@iom.int

For Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH): washsupport@iom.int

For the Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM): dtmsupport@iom.int

For Health: mhdhqemergencyhealth@iom.int

For Psychosocial Support: contactpss@iom.int

For Protection: protectioncore@iom.int

M&E focal points are also available in the Regional Office and can provide guidance and additional information.

The Office of the Inspector General (OIG), supports country offices in carrying out evaluations and can provide guidance on how to design terms of references for evaluation and technical support for the planning and implementation of an evaluation. In addition, OIG can provide additional support in monitoring, such as developing and implementing monitoring frameworks and capacity development in M&E.

For support contact the Evaluations team: eva@iom.int.

In addition, there is an M&E Practitioners SharePoint network which is open to IOM staff and provides resources and information about M&E. If you are interested in joining the network, you can email eva@iom.int to be included.

References and Tools

- OCHA Stay and Deliver
- Sphere Monitoring and Evaluation

Other Entries in this Topic

- IOM Corporate Emergency Activation
- Situational Reports (Sitreps)

Document date

Document last updated: Feb 2023

Public Information in Emergencies

Overview

Public information and media coverage helps IOM with:

- **Fundraising:** Independent media reporting on certain needs in a crisis and projects undertaken by IOM to address these needs can have a significant influence on donors' representatives.
- **Visibility:** In an increasingly media-driven world, visibility implies presence and effectiveness of an organization.
- **Education:** Educating the public and generating discussions around particular aspects and projects of IOM establishes the Organization's status as a reliable, accurate source of information and can generate further support.

Apart from the external sitrep that is usually disseminated through a mailing list, other forms of disseminating information should be used. This includes: press notes, social media (Twitter, Facebook, Instagram and YouTube), a mission website and press events.

Depending on the capacity of the country office, press note, a website, tweets and Facebook updates can be made by the country office directly. Where additional support is needed, the country office can contact the Media and Communications Division (MCD) for support and guidance.

Description

Communications Strategy

It is helpful to develop a brief communications strategy as soon as possible. This internal document outlines the **objectives, messages, audiences** and **tools** that will comprise the mission's communications activities. The communications strategy can cover the entire country office, or a specific project or response effort. While not formally required, developing a strategy is an effective practice to ensure that consistent and effective communication activities are carried out to meet a clear objective.

A Communications Strategy Template is available in the References and Tools Section. For additional reference, the IOM Afghanistan Communications Strategy (2015) is also provided as an example. IOM Afghanistan adapted the template provided to suit the needs of the mission.

Media Interviews

Successful media communications are indispensable to enhance IOM visibility, especially during emergencies. Governments, donors and persons affected by crisis are much more likely to hear about the emergency response through the media than through official documents.

In an emergency, it's important to make clear from the outset which staff are authorized to speak with the media. This is at the discretion of management, based on knowledge, experience etc. Journalists will generally want to speak to people on the ‘frontline', and also have an official quote from the Chief of Mission

(COM) or another senior staff member.

For media interviews, make sure that you know your subject material and prepare your message carefully. Organize your thoughts before speaking to the media, whether you're being interviewed on camera, in person or by telephone. At all times, your message should rest on three pillars:

1. Knowledge - We know what is going on and we listen

2. Caring - We feel for the people we serve

3. Action - We are doing something to help them

For more interview preparation and tips, see the Media and Communications Handbook on the intranet.

Press Notes

A press notes is a key building block for establishing IOM's presence, thereby enhancing funding opportunities, especially in the early phases of emergencies. The main elements of a press note should be simple and clear and carefully name check donors, partners and host governments. Remember the basics and always include the ‘who, what, where and when' of any operation. Good relationships with the media can support in distributing the information at local and international level, by using their extensive mailing lists and widely viewed press release platforms.

Press notes should be released on a regular basis to highlight IOM's achievements and keep external audiences informed. Press notes can be developed 1) to announce the beginning of a project, highlighting who the donor is and how this support is essential for the overall humanitarian response; 2) when a major activity has been completed by the country office; 3) during key dates (e.g. 6 months into the response, Independence Day etc.). News outlets will generally be more interested in the situation than IOM's response to it; therefore, it is recommended to lead with an overview of the situation, background information, key figures and quotes.

Think about your audience (global, local or regional) when drafting the text, and be sure to explain IOM's work and who we are clearly. Try to refrain from using acronyms, "project speak" or technical terms that people outside of the humanitarian response will not understand.

Press notes may be publicized through the UN system. To do so, the approved copy should be sent to MCD no later than close of business on any Monday or Thursday for timely distribution to the media at the twice weekly press briefings (Tuesday and Friday mornings) at the UN in Geneva.

For more information on how to write a press note, see the IOM Media and Communications Handbook on the intranet and in the References and Tools section.

Country Website

If there is capacity in the country office, the country website should be managed at the country level with technical guidance from the Online Communications Unit (OCU) in Manila to ensure brand consistency. The focal point will need to devote time to keeping the page updated. Web programming skills are not necessary, but the focal point will need a short tutorial on how to use WordPress or a similar content management system if they have never used this system before.

In the event that there is no capacity at the country level, key publications and updates can be shared with OCU, and they can maintain the country website or update the country page on the global site from Manila.

Social Media

Social media, in particular Twitter, offers a channel by which to provide free, timely updates to audiences who no longer use mainstream media but rely on mobile devices instead. IOM encourages and supports active use of social media platforms (Facebook, Twitter etc.) to widely disseminate messages in times of crisis. Remember to tweet early and tweet often on a local Twitter account and remember to tag the global account (@UNmigration) to ensure retweeting, thereby widening the audience. IOM's donors, Member States, partners and the media all monitor Twitter carefully.

Like the website, social media accounts can be managed locally if there is someone who can dedicate the proper time. Social media pages need to be regularly updated.

Twitter (with its character post limit) is a good tool for sharing statistics and figures quickly. The speed at which a tweet can spread means it's important to check figures carefully before posting. Remember that the lifecycle of a tweet is very short. It's important to tweet continuously, especially during emergencies, up to once an hour. Facebook allows for greater post length (although it's best not to exceed a paragraph or two), and is a good platform to post photo albums and other visual content to engage audiences. Keep posts short and simple overall – you can link to publications and more detailed, technical content hosted on the mission website. Instagram is also a good platform to share photos that illustrate IOM in action.

For more information please refer to the Guidelines for the use of Social Media in IOM available on the intranet and in the References and Tools section.

Media Library

Imagery has become the world's most spoken language and it is therefore essential to capture and share photographs with emotional content. Always be sure to obtain the consent of those being photographed and not to put the person at risk by publishing the photograph (especially important for vulnerable individuals such as unaccompanied and separated children and victims of trafficking).

Quality photographs taken by the mission should be regularly uploaded to the IOM Media Library. In addition to being used for public information activities, photos can be used for external situation reports, donor reports, IOM appeals and other resource mobilization activities. Regularly updating the Media Library will ensure that photos are readily available for use whenever they are needed by the mission, the Regional Office, and headquarters.

When cataloging photos it is important to include information on the date and location of the activity, the type of activity and the photographer. See the IOM Media and Communications Handbook and the IOM blog post ‘Taking Photos in the Field' for more information on how to take good photos.

Internal Reporting and External Communications

In an emergency response, internal sitreps are usually developed and disseminated on a regular basis. These internal reports can be a very useful resource for developing external communication messages. Where internal reports exist, be sure to access these reports to help develop external messaging.

Managing a Media Contact List

Maintaining an updated list of media contacts is essential for good media relations. In a humanitarian situation, media focal points at the country level may change throughout the response. As a result, it is important to maintain an up-to-date contact list in order to facilitate continuous communication and to ensure updates are shared with the appropriate counterparts.

Attached is a country office media contact list template that can be used to consolidate media contact information. Separate tabs for international and national media contacts are included. Note that this template can be used to consolidate contact information for any stakeholder (e.g. the template can be modified to maintain contact information of donors, partners etc.).

Relevance to IOM’s Emergency Operations

Sharing information on IOM's activities in emergency response operations is essential to increasing IOM's visibility. These updates can often lead to more support from donors who regularly receive information on IOM's achievements. Well-informed media, donors and the public can be valuable allies.

Links

- MCD SharePoint Site
- Guidelines for the use of social media in IOM
- IOM's blogspot taking photos in the field

Media

- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OJN2FcRpPVw

Contacts

MCD, OCU and ECO are available to answer questions and provide support. Don't hesitate to contact them for advice, particularly in the case of difficult questions from journalists, interview requests, etc.

Media and Communications Division (MCD): mcd1@iom.int.

Online Communications Unit (OCU): ocu@iom.int.

Ethics and Conduct Office (ECO): ecu@iom.int.

References and Tools

- Guidelines on personal use of social media
- Country Office Media Contact List Template
- Communications Strategy Template
- Sample Media Strategy (IOM Afghanistan 2015)

Document date

Document last updated: Nov 2023