

RESPONDING TO THE CRISIS –
HOW MNOS ARE HELPING
PUBLIC SAFETY INITIATIVES



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The global COVID-19 pandemic has created a host of new challenges, as people, organisations and authorities adjust to the new reality. However, the situation has also created opportunities for new forms of collaboration in order to help manage the crisis and to ensure public safety.

Initially, much of the attention paid to mobile network operators (MNOs) focused on changing traffic patterns and surging demand for specific applications. Behind the scenes, though, MNOs were taking steps to support Governmental initiatives to protect the public. It turns out that the tools and resources MNOs use to run and optimise their networks can provide valuable insights that can be used to support public responses.

For example, many countries have imposed social distancing and lock-down regulations. While most people have responded well to such requirements, Governments still need to monitor the effectiveness of such initiatives, so they can tune their responses. Mobility information provides data to measure and manage the impact of such measures.

All MNOs constantly monitor traffic activities, so that they can ensure the smooth operation of their networks. They need to be able to identify the most frequently visited locations as well as the least, so they can plan capacity. With COVID-19, Governments need to know how many people are congregating in different places, so that they can take the appropriate actions.

The data used to measure and manage traffic provides a useful proxy for direct observations. In one country, the MNO, a Polystar customer, collected random samples from each cell in its mobile network. These were anonymised and an algorithm was created to correlate the data with the dimensions of each site.

This created an “area mobility factor”, allowing the Government to determine population density and proximity within given cells. Repeating the exercise allowed user activity to be tracked through time, so that the Government can assess the impact and effectiveness of lockdown restrictions. This allows them to issue new advice or investigate further to ensure that guidelines are adhered to.

Of course, understanding how the population responds to and respects lockdown restrictions is useful, but there are other examples of innovative collaboration between MNOs and Governments. In one case, an MNO has used analysis of the connected population to help with tracking at-risk and vulnerable people.

In this example, the Government wanted to be able to identify people who were roaming – both in country and overseas. The MNO used data collected by its Polystar solutions to identify ‘inbound’ roamers, who were visiting the country, as well as people returning from abroad. The Government wanted to be able to see where people had come from. If they had visited or come from a high-risk location, steps could be taken to provide

appropriate treatment and, if necessary, help them to isolate.

Similarly, if people from the home network were roaming in another country – ‘outbound’ roamers – the Government could also take steps to give them the right advice and help with repatriation programmes.

While this is an extraordinary situation, MNOs have become crucial partners to Governments and authorities. The data they can access is helping to contain and control the spread of COVID-19, as well as to ensure that protection measures are implemented effectively. Of course, there are sensitivities involved, but because data can be protected, good governance and data security programmes can also be observed – with the right tools, people can be protected both individually and collectively.



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Polystar is a leading provider of real-time monitoring and analytics platforms to more than 100 CSPs worldwide. The company's solutions deliver tailored insights into network, service and OTT application performance. These insights allow stakeholders to enhance customer experience, operational efficiency, and identify new revenue streams from data monetisation.

Polystar's products enable the smooth introduction of new technologies and services, including 5G, NFV and IoT, helping CSPs build and operate cost efficient, secure and reliable networks.

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