



**Strathmore**  
UNIVERSITY

**SCHOOL OF HUMANITIES & SOCIAL SCIENCES**  
**BACHELOR OF ARTS IN COMMUNICATION**  
**BAC4104 ISSUES AND CRISIS MANAGEMENT**  
**END OF SEMESTER EXAM**

**DATE: 24<sup>th</sup> October 2024**

**TIME: 13:00-15:00**

**Instructions**

- i) Answer **question one** and any other **TWO** questions in the answer booklet provided.
- ii) Be sure to write your arguments accurately using grammatically correct language.
- iii) Poor expression of thought and language will be penalised by the deduction of up to 5 marks from the overall score.

**QUESTION ONE (40 MARKS)**

**The Great African Water Crisis: The Case of AquaPure International**

*This case has been developed for purposes of learning and does not in anyway represent the truth of the company or the characters mentioned.*

AquaPure International is a multinational corporation specializing in water purification and distribution. With a strong global footprint, the company prides itself on providing clean, safe drinking water to communities worldwide. Its operations in Africa, particularly in the drought-prone Sahel region, have been a cornerstone of its social responsibility initiatives.

In June 2023, AquaPure International faced its most significant challenge yet: a devastating water crisis in the Sahel region of Africa. A combination of factors exacerbated the situation:

- i) An unprecedented drought gripped the region, causing water levels in rivers, lakes, and underground aquifers to plummet. This led to acute water shortages for both humans and livestock.
- ii) Rapid population growth and urbanization in the region put immense pressure on existing water resources. This, coupled with the drought, created a perfect storm of water scarcity.
- iii) The drought also impacted AquaPure's supply chain. Essential materials for water purification and distribution, such as chemicals and plastic containers, became scarce and expensive.
- iv) Water scarcity is often linked to social unrest. Tensions escalated in several communities, leading to protests and even violence directed at water distribution points. Ten people were reported dead as a direct result of the tension.

The crisis had a profound impact on AquaPure's operations and reputation. There were Operational Challenges. The company faced significant challenges in maintaining water production and distribution. Production facilities struggled to operate due to water scarcity, and transportation of water became increasingly difficult due to deteriorating road conditions.

The increased costs of raw materials, coupled with declining sales due to reduced water availability, led to significant financial losses for the company.

AquaPure faced intense criticism from the public, NGOs, and government officials for its perceived failure to address the water crisis effectively. The company was accused of profiteering from the situation and neglecting its social responsibility commitments.

Employees and facilities were at risk due to the increasing civil unrest. Several AquaPure staff members were injured, and some facilities were vandalized.

## Media Appearance

The press located the CEO Rosha Sarwah in the field and various journalists were keen to talk to him. Asked about the situation this is what Rosha said:

"The water crisis in the Sahel is a complex humanitarian challenge that requires a multifaceted solution. AquaPure International has been a steadfast partner to the region for decades, investing millions in infrastructure, technology, and community development. While the recent drought has undoubtedly exacerbated the situation, it's important to understand the broader context. We have faced unprecedented challenges, including supply chain disruptions, increased operational costs, and escalating security risks. Despite these obstacles, we have continued to operate, providing life-saving water to millions. Our commitment to the region remains unwavering.

We acknowledge that there is always room for improvement, and we are committed to learning from this experience. We are actively exploring innovative solutions, such as rainwater harvesting and desalination, to increase water availability. Additionally, we are strengthening our community engagement programs to build resilience and empower local populations.

It's crucial to remember that addressing this crisis requires a collaborative effort involving governments, NGOs, and the private sector. AquaPure is a vital part of this equation, and we will continue to play our role in building a sustainable water future for the Sahel."

### QUESTION 1 (40 MARKS)

1. "There is a subtle difference between crisis communication and crisis management." Elaborate. (3marks)
2. Could AquaPure have prevented the crisis? Justify your answer. (3 marks)
3. As a communication graduate and newly employed Communication Manager by AquaPure, you discover that the company has no crisis communication strategy.
  - a. Raise any 3 arguments to justify the value of a crisis communication strategy. (6 marks)
  - b. Discuss three key roles you can play to help the organisation navigate this crisis? (9 marks)

4. "Crisis response" is a critical response to a crisis, especially to stakeholders.
  - a. The CEO attended the press briefing alone. Critique this move by raising 2 arguments. (2 marks)
  - b. What were the strengths and weaknesses of the CEO's response? Discuss any 4. They do not have to be balanced in number. (8 marks)
5. Broadly speaking, crises go through 3 phases, the last being a "postcrisis phase". In the context of AquaPure, suggest 3 ways they can navigate this phase successfully. (9 marks)

**QUESTION TWO (10 marks)**

One of the most helpful theories in a crisis is the Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT). Analyse the AquaPure Crisis using the theory.

**QUESTION THREE (10 marks)**

Another invaluable theory is the Attribution Theory. Discuss the gist of the theory and give examples to justify your answer.

**QUESTION FOUR (10 marks)**

Describe any 5 elements of a crisis plan.