Concept Note
on

2 Days Training Program on
"Managing Crowd at Events and Venues of Mass Gathering"
Dates: 09-10 June 2022
Venue: Smart Classroom, Ground Floor, GIDM

Gujarat Institute of Disaster Management

B/h PDP University,
Raisan Village, Gandhinagar - 382007
Gujarat (INDIA)

Concept Note

Managing Crowd at Events and Venues of Mass Gathering

1. Background:

Stampedes have been a recurring phenomenon in India. Tragedies of people being trampled to death have taken place at religious gatherings, mass processions, election rallies and even at music concerts. According to the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB), a total of 3216 incidents of stampede have taken place in India between 2001 and 2014, leading to 2421 casualties. Moreover, 79% of all such stampedes in India occur at places of worship. The high incidence of such stampedes in India highlights the need for effective crowd management in the country.

Given the ubiquity of crowded places, Indians tend to have a high tolerance for them. Thus, it is important to understand how crowds operate. As soon as the word "crowd" is heard, the first instinct is to "manage" them, if not control them. Given the unusual number of stampedes taking place at religious congregations in the country it is important to manage these crowds both efficiently and creatively.

An event of Mass Gathering is generally characterized by huge number of people accumulating in a very limited space in a short span of time. Different regions, religions and faiths have their own ways of celebrating their festivals. Generally, these celebrations end up becoming an event of mass gathering.

With such events, it becomes imperative for the local administration/ government to get involved and make arrangements to keep the conduct of the events as smooth as possible. They need to prepare themselves according to all aspects of disaster management, health, hygiene and medical care, mass casualty engagement, media relations, security of people, and care for vulnerable groups, etc.

Such events, though observed for a limited time, sometimes attract a crowd, which if not managed carefully can lead to a catastrophe. The following are some critical crowd management issues which should be considered by the organizers of any mass gathering:

  a. Mix of visitors on the basis of age, physical fitness, gender

  b. Religious sensitivity of the devotees for religious functions

  c. Managing the waiting time for the devotees at the gathering

  d. Ensuring cleanliness of the venue

  e. Providing a reasonable degree of comfort to the waiting devotees

  f. Medical assistance for the sick or injured people

  g. Special arrangements for infants, children, old and infirm devotees

  h. Special security measures to avert potential terrorist attacks

If the above concerns are not properly managed then stampedes can take place at such events.

2. Processes Involved on Crowd Management :

The integrated approach for the crowd management can be pictorially represented as given below:
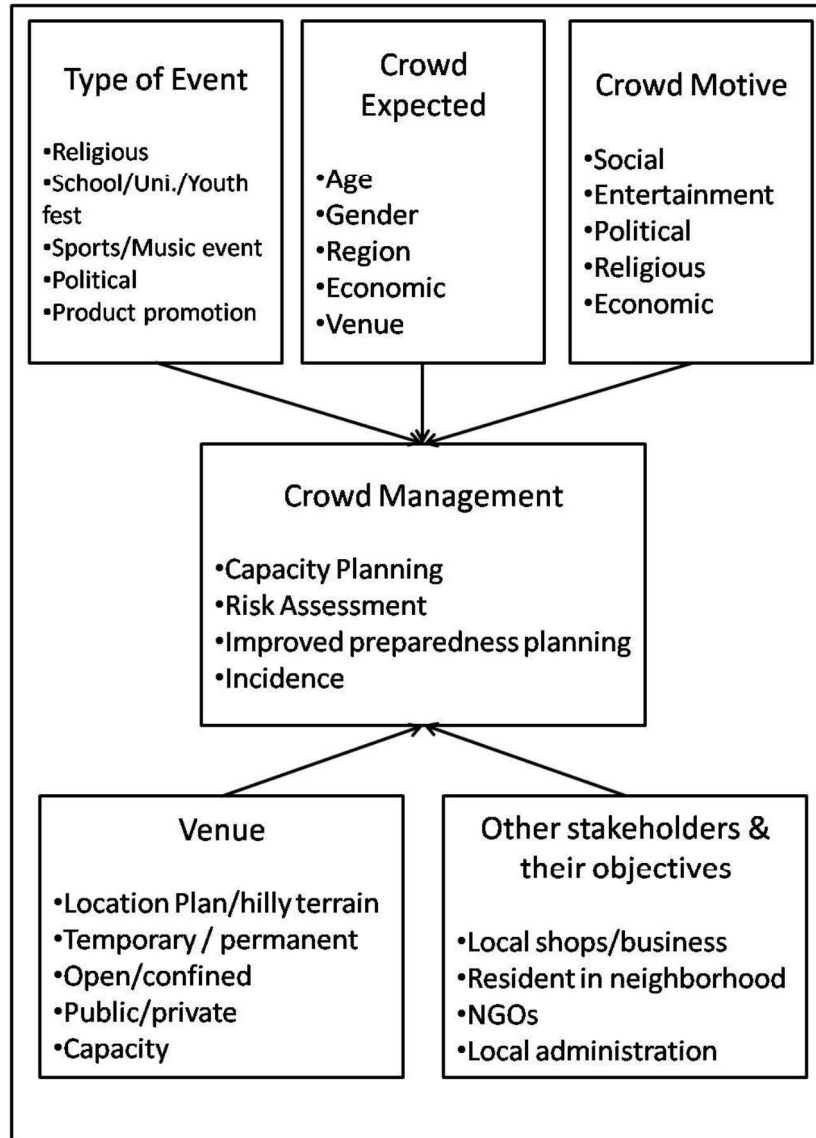
Source: NDMA "A Guide for State Government, Local Authorities, Administrator and Organizer" 2014

3. Planning for Crowd Management:

Special events always require special management measures, including non- routine investments of public resources to cope with the large crowds they draw. Some of the crowd control strategies are listed below:

a. Evaluate temple capacity, inclusive of all waiting areas considering reasonable waiting time – compare with requirement

b. Shorten duration of religious procedures for faster turnaround

c. Carry out crowd congestion analysis - identify bottlenecks in crowd movement

d. Make provision for adequate space in waiting areas to reduce claustrophobia

e. Quick exits with proper and well-lit signage

f. Forced ventilation in waiting areas to prevent heating and air quality deterioration

g. Multiple queues for different types of visitors: elderly, women and children, differently abled

h. Crowd safety training to employees/staff and security personnel – implement active and passive surveillance

i. Improve access to premises from outside – alter location of offerings shops, decentralization of markets and shops near the gathering

Identification of main organizer/sponsor and other key stakeholders prior to event and regular consultation with them is also important, since many times last minute changes are made which require adjustments in the planning of events and crowd management. Many at times, it is observed that the administration avoids adopting a multi stakeholder approach along with identification of new risks.

3.1. Religious Events:

India has experienced major crowd related disasters over past years. The majority of these disasters are related to religious festivals. Statistics show that more than 70% of crowd related disasters in India have occurred during religious celebrations.

National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) has published a guiding tool on "Managing Crowd and Events and Venues of Mass Gathering – 2014". It has also reference to different actions in managing the crowd efficiently and process involved in organizing the events and its closure. There is mention of quick response teams along with coordination teams with relevant departments.

In view of the guidance tool, there is no specific tool for on crowd management in the aftermath of incidence caused by natural disaster any manmade disaster in the state. Hence, proposing a training program involving concern stakeholders.

3.2. Targeted Participants:

The target group for this program will be the coordination officers involved in crowd/ event management at different levels from Departments viz. Home Department (Police Inspectors, PSI) Health Department (RMO/Superintendents), Revenues Department (District Project Officers), Forest Department (ACF/RFO), Gujarat Tourism & Dev Sthan Management (Managers and Administrators) and Festival Fair Organizers.

4. Expected Outcomes:

The expected outcome of the proposed training program is to:

Develop understanding of stakeholders (Departments, agencies, institutions & NGOs and communities at large on effective crowd Management processes.

Develop a Preparedness plan taking care of the underlying

    i. Community Engagement

    ii. Preparedness measures, capacity building and training needs.

    iii. Preparation of QRTs

    iv. Developing SOPs on crowd management suggestions and inputs for functional role and delegation of power of authorities on crowd management.

    v. Authorities and references: Institutional arrangement for District and Taluka level and concerned authorities

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