A mass gathering is a planned or spontaneous event where the number of people attending is sufficient to strain the planning and response resources of the community, state or nation hosting the event.

MGs can stretch health systems beyond their capacity; however, these events also present opportunities for long lasting positive legacy in the form of

- strengthened public health systems,
- enhanced medical and hospital services,
- improved living environment,
- increased public health awareness.

Under the International Health Regulations (2005), WHO works with Member States and multiple organizations worldwide to develop the necessary policies, measures and instruments for managing the potential public health risks associated with mass gathering events.

WHO’s Mass Gatherings Group & Networks has partnered with MGs organizers for numerous events, including

- sports events (e.g., Summer and Winter Olympics, FIFA World Cup),
- religious events (e.g., Hajj, World Youth Day)
- cultural festivals.
Guiding

In order to support mass gatherings, WHO provides a framework to assess their public health capacities in accordance with the IHR. WHO also offers planning resources to assist Member States in improving health protection, prompt detection, characterization and control of any public health threats, natural or man-made.

Strengthening

Leaving a viable public health legacy and sustainable improvements in health infrastructure and capacity should be a key aim of those involved with preparing for any MG. Legacy can include improvements in the health systems in the host country, improvements in health behaviours, and ability to deliver future MGs.

Collaborating

WHO set up a global network of collaborating centres and MGs experts to adapt WHO’s advice for a specific mass gatherings event, continue developing framework for building health legacy post mass gathering event, advocate for safety and security at MGs, provide operational research support to mass gatherings medicine.

WHO assists Member States in organizing and hosting mass gathering events while aiming for a lasting legacy

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