

### **Disaster Planning & Recovery** **Publication Date: October 2022**

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# 1. Introduction

This document, under the leadership of the ISKCON Deity Worship Ministry (IDWM), has been formulated considering the need to provide guidance to pujaris, temple presidents and other relevant devotees in matters related to the well-being, safety and care of installed deities in instances of disasters.

We have termed this process '*Disaster Planning and Recovery*' and encourage all the relevant devotees to adopt the standards as set out in this document.

Planning in advance by considering known geo-political and socio-economic information in your vicinity, country or continent will ensure that should a disaster ever occur, you will be better prepared to deal with the obstacles faced in aiding, protecting and serving the installed deities.

## 1.1 Background

From the onset of 2020 the world has seen numerous events that have resulted in the compromise of many ISKCON temples and centers globally, with some experiencing extreme consequences with regard to the ability to serve installed deities.

Some of the examples include:

- a. In 2021 the violent **protest** action against Hindus in Bangladesh which saw:
  - The destruction of the temple; and
  - The horrific destruction of the installed deity of Srila Prabhupada; and
  - The loss of life of devotees.
  
- b. In 2021 the violent **riots and protest** action around Sri Sri Radha Radhanath temple in Durban, South Africa, which saw:
  - The removal of the small deities off-site to a safe premises; and
  - Closure of the temple, and safeguarding of the temple altar with the installed large deities away from any sort of danger; and
  - The evacuation of the residing initiating Spiritual Master (who was the then global ISKCON GBC Head) and temple residents in the middle of the night.
  
- c. In 2022 the **invasion** of Russian forces into Ukraine which saw:
  - The immediate evacuation of citizens out of the country; and
  - The mobilisation of temple devotees into the ISKCON Kyiv residences for their safety and well-being.

- d. In 2022 the Russia-Ukraine War effects, we see global ***inflation and shortages***:
- Increasing shortages of basic food items such as oil, grain, wheat and sugar in Europe – thus, impacting the ability to serve the deities at the required standard as well as to serve the wider temple devotees in terms of their sustenance.
- e. In 2022 the devastating ***natural disaster*** of floods in KZN, South Africa which saw:
- Destruction of main roads, bridges, water infrastructure, power lines etc which hampered the temples in their ability to function as normal; and
  - Interrupted supply of basic utilities such as water and power for extended periods directly impacting the service of the deities; and
  - Inability of key devotees to access the temple due to road destruction.

The above examples of disasters were driven by one of the below categories:

- Socio-political tension
- Geo-political tension
- Climate change
- Socio-economic conditions
- Natural disasters

We anticipate more disasters, both in terms of frequency and intensity. Thus, to limit the impact of these disasters on the temples, deities, devotees as well as temple activities, this document aims to equip with the necessary tools to ensure preventative and recovery actions in the (likely) event of disasters.

## 2. Planning

The key to dealing with disasters in any country is planning. Having adequate knowledge of relevant and applicable information for your temple on a regular basis will provide ***advanced insight*** before a disaster occurs to minimise the negative impact on deity service standards and to ensure adequate protection of deities.

We understand that temple authorities and serving pujaris can be busily engaged in devotional service without much insight into the occurrences of the material world such as the latest news and, or other information which could impact the temple.

Thus, the disaster planning template that has been formulated under Section 5 of this document allows for such insight to enable more efficient planning. Completion of the template simulates discussion and insight into topics that could affect the temple in the near future in any one of the five disaster categories noted above.

## 2.1 Identify the Assigned Devotees

It is important that the correct devotees are identified in order for the process to be truly effective. Thus, this task of identifying the correct devotees could lean towards the temple president, senior pujaris or devotees getting involved. Other suitable persons that have knowledge about this topic could be engaged, however, it is important that they work closely with the temple president and pujaris to ensure offenses to the deities are not caused.

### Planning Takeaway Task:

#### Temple president (or another relevant devotee) could:

- a) Identify appropriate devotees to be assigned this task
- b) Familiarize the contents of this document with them
- c) ***Complete the template under Section 5 with as much research, discussion and insight from internal and external sources***
- d) Aim to complete the template within a certain time frame
- e) Review the completed template and discuss all the gaps as applicable to your temple
- f) Residual gaps that cannot be addressed now need to be noted for the future

## 2.2 Frequency of Planning

Upon completion of the template under Section 5, it is recommended that going forward this process of disaster planning and recovery is reviewed as per the below guidelines:

- Annually, if the situation is calm with low disaster potential on the horizon.
- Monthly, if the situation is stormy with imminent disaster on the horizon.
- Weekly or daily, if the situation is very tense with disaster close to materialising.

Alternatively, the template under Section 5 can be reviewed as needed with the temple president and head pujari as well as the input garnered from other senior devotees.

### Frequency and Planning Takeaway Task:

#### Temple president (or another relevant devotee) could:

- a) Discuss and agree on the frequency with the assigned devotees.
- b) Assess the situation with the assigned devotees and adjust the frequency as needed.

## 2.3 Keeping the plan up to date and distribution of copies

We respect that while the template provides advance planning, it is likely that should an event occur the actual recovery process might change as necessitated by reality and real-time needs. However, key information already in the template is extremely useful and should be both updated and widely distributed to the necessary devotees.

This is especially true:

- To quickly obtain contact details of key suppliers/service vendors
- Location of keys/locks to the safety room for deities

### **Keeping up-to-date and distribution takeaway task:**

#### **Temple president (or another relevant devotee) could:**

- a) Have copies of this plan made available either in hardcopy or electronic version to all necessary devotees in advance
- b) Update the plan as per the frequency guidelines above

## 3. Summary of Disaster and Planning template

The template is available in downloadable format on the IDWM website. It is available both in PDF, Microsoft Word and Microsoft Excel versions for easy population either manually in the printed hardcopy or electronically.

### **Section A – Scenario Planning**

- This section entails the initial assessment of applicable scenarios for your temple.
- It further allows for the elimination of those disasters that are not applicable to your temple vicinity and focuses on the real risks that could threaten the temple.
- Please note that the applicable scenarios can change over time and thus should be completed as per the frequency guidelines above.

## Section B – Recovery Planning

- This section entails the various steps taken for specific instances of disaster recovery. Updates to this section will be circulated via the zonal reps annually and will also be available on the website

## Section C – Contact Details

- Please keep this section updated in advance with necessary contact details.

## 4. Conclusion

We see in Sastra, CC. *Madhya Lila Verse 42*, an example of the beautiful Gopala deity none other than The Supreme Personality of Godhead Himself who had to face an extreme disaster during the Muslim invasion of India where the same installed deity had to be hidden in the bush for long periods suffering heat, rain, wind etc. Madhavendra Puri was instructed to carefully take the deity out of hiding and install at the temple. As caretakers of installed deities, we all have a huge responsibility in the well-being and safety of deities.

Facing disaster is a nightmare and we pray that this document pertaining to disaster recovery & planning provides some assistance in dealing with the matter.

In any disaster it is not necessary to follow the exact steps as-is but to adopt what is applicable with regard to your circumstances.

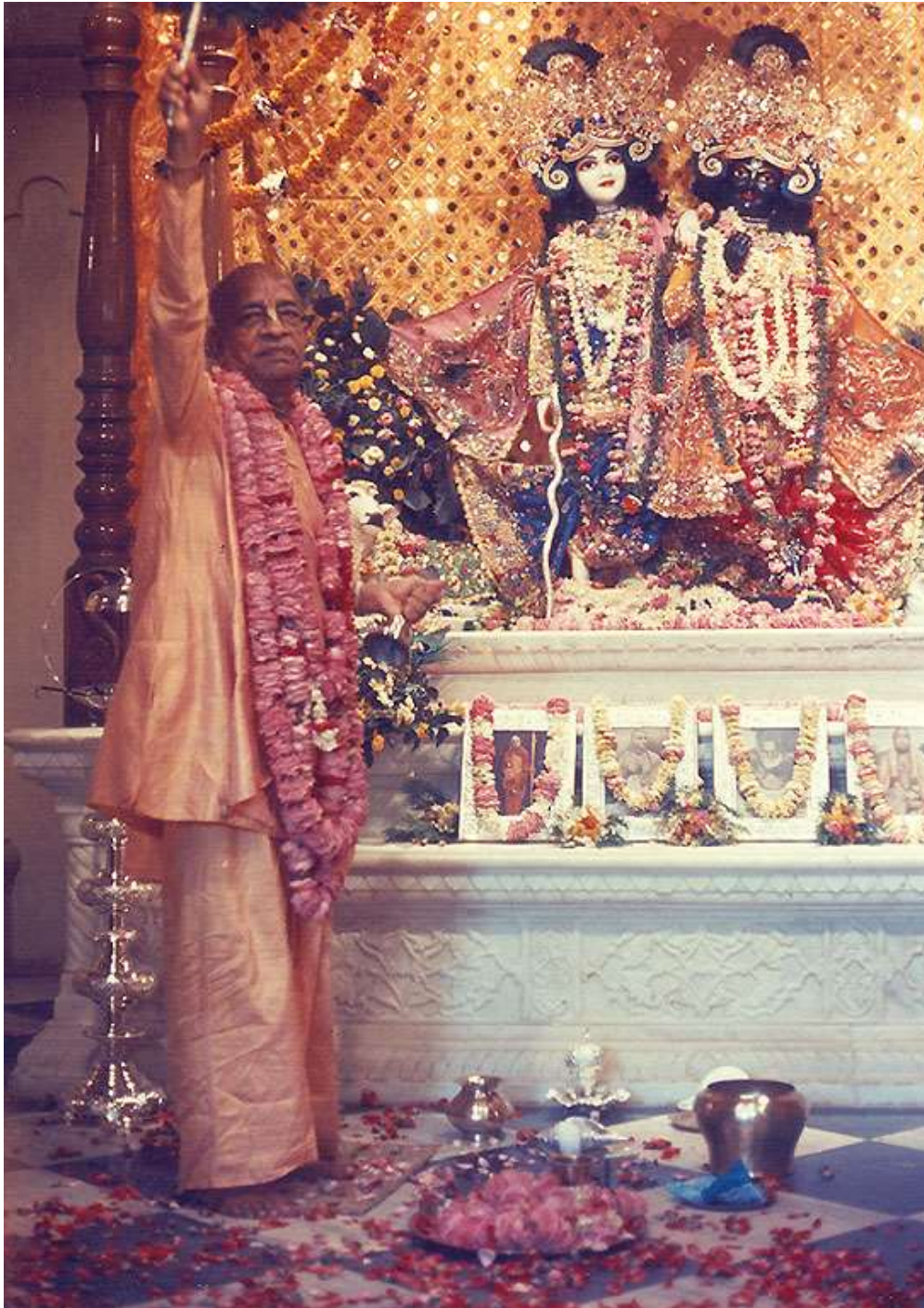
The IDWM is first and foremost your servant, as well as your partner and can be contacted at any point in time for guidance and clarification on deity worship related matters.

We pray to Lord Krsna, the Supreme Personality of Godhead and Srila Prabhupada, our most beloved Founder-arcarya, for their constant mercy, guidance and protection for all ISKCON deities around the world during difficult times.

**Your Servant,  
ISKCON Deity Worship Ministry**

## 5. Disaster Recovery and Planning Template

- ✓ Section A - Scenario Planning
- ✓ Section B - Recovery Planning
- ✓ Section C - Key Contact Details





## Section A - Scenario Planning

This section sets out the possible landscape of disasters. Consider which are applicable to you.

Where uncertain on any aspects, IDWM suggests research and collaborative discussion with other devotees to get the most accurate assessment. This section might require conversation amongst devotees to complete population.

Please tick whichever of the below is applicable to your temple.

<b>Key:</b>	
<b>Yes</b>	This specific scenario could occur in your temple vicinity and has known to happen before
<b>No</b>	There is no possibility of this event occurring or affecting your temple vicinity
<b>High Risk</b>	75% to 100% chance of materialising
<b>Medium Risk</b>	50% to 74% chance of materialising
<b>Low Risk</b>	<50% chance of materialising <i>For example, floods have occurred in the past and thus could occur in future but the probability of it occurring is low or less than 50% present</i>
<b>&lt;1 week</b>	100% chance of happening in full or partly anytime soon
<b>&lt;1 month</b>	100% chance of happening in full or partly anytime in the next few weeks to a month
<b>&lt; 3 months</b>	100% chance of happening in full or partly anytime in the next one to three months

Yes	No
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If you answered <b>Yes</b> , please consider the risk		
High Risk	Medium Risk	Low Risk

If you answered <b>High Risk</b> , please consider the timing		
<1month	<3month	<1 year

Recovery Section
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**1. Natural Disasters or Climate Change Impact**

1.1 Flooding								B1 - B6
1.2 Wildfires								B1 - B6
1.3 Earthquake								B1 - B6
1.4 Lightning or Thunderbolt								B1 - B6
1.5. Sea Surge or Tsunami's								B1 - B6
1.6 Excessive Storm or Wind								B1 - B6
1.7 Snow and Avalanches								B1 - B6
1.8 Volcanic Eruptions								B1 - B6
1.9 Hurricanes								B1 - B6
1.10 Droughts								B1 - B6
1.11 Other								B1 - B6

**2. Geo-Political Scenario's**

2.1 Civil Protests and Riots (Civil, Religious, Government)								B1 - B6
2.2 War Invasion and war crimes								B1 - B6
2.3 Terror Attacks								B1 - B6
2.4 Increased Corruption leading to violent unrest								B1 - B6
2.5 Corruption resulting in loss of power and water supply								B1 - B6
2.6 Loss of Government or Threat of Government overturn								B1 - B6
2.7 Hyper-Inflation due to declining currency								B1 - B6
2.8 Other								B1 - B6



**3. Socio-Economic Scenario's and related**

- 3.1 Declining Economy or Increasing Inflation
- 3.2 Lack of availability of basic food supplies e.g., wheat, grain
- 3.3 Lack of water supply
- 3.4 Lack of power supply
- 3.5 Lack of infrastructure (road, highway) for supplies
- 3.5 Lack of outside devotees getting to temple




B1 - B6  
B1 - B6  
B1 - B6  
B1 - B6  
B1 - B6  
B1 - B6

**4. Other Risks**

- 4.1 Malicious devotees that could cause harm
- 4.2 Malicious neighbours that could cause harm
- 4.3 Malicious government authorities that could cause harm
- 4.4 Does temple have movable Tulasi plants – risk to Tulasi Maharani




B1 - B6  
B1 - B6  
B1 - B6



<b>Section B - Recovery Planning</b>	
<b>B 1</b>	<b>Water Shortages</b>
	<i>Rationale</i>
	Water should always be kept on site for any number of events or break in supply
	<u>Steps</u>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work out minimum water requirements for at least 3 to 7 days or longer if needed.</li> <li>• Get the necessary containers and storage facilities.</li> <li>• Keep clean water on hand for the needs of deities and service to the deities.</li> <li>• Keep drinking water on hand for the needs of cooking and cleaning of temple.</li> <li>• Keep bathing water on hand for the needs of the devotees.</li> <li>• Keep grey water on hand for the needs of flushing toilets etc. if limited supply.</li> <li>• Have a supplier (municipal, grocer or devotee) that can provide from other areas if needed.</li> <li>• Consider building a well if persistent water issues.</li> </ul>
<b>B 2</b>	<b>Power Shortages</b>
	<i>Rationale</i>
	Alternate power supply should be considered and kept on hand
	<u>Steps</u>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consider the investment in a generator and have back-up fuel.</li> <li>• Have a spare gas stove and back-up gas for a week's worth.</li> <li>• Keep candles and matches in supply and separate from normal daily stock.</li> <li>• Consider keeping firewood or dried cow-dung in supply for cooking needs.</li> <li>• If persistent issues with power, consider investing in solar powered alternatives.</li> <li>• Aim to keep a power bank on hand and fully charged for cell phones/mobiles.</li> <li>• Invest in a UPS for Wi-Fi needs and other small electrical appliances .</li> </ul>
<b>B 3</b>	<b>Food Shortages</b>
	<i>Rationale</i>
	Non-perishable offerings (e.g., wheat, grains, pulses and lentils, nuts, ghee, oil, flour, seeds, rice, dry spices etc.) must be stocked.
	Oats, almonds must be kept on hand.
	<u>Steps</u>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Keep back-up food on hand for at least two weeks and if the risk increases, this stock should be increased as necessary prior to events.</li> <li>• When milk is short - convert oats to oat milk, almonds to almond milk to use where necessary. Simple milk instead of water could be another option in an emergency.</li> <li>• Long life milk could be stocked up and used where permitted per zonal rules.</li> </ul>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have suppliers on hand that understand the temple's needs and will give first preference if shortages to serve the deities.</li> </ul>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Change the standards of the daily offerings to what is readily available e.g., dhall and rice, kitchari, roti and dhall etc.</li> </ul>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lean on available/all/willing devotees outside the temple to provide bhoga per the related risk who might have access or be growing their own bhoga at home which is available.</li> </ul>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have cash on hand in the temple or reserves in the bank account if needed to pay bhoga should prices increase.</li> </ul>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consider going off the grid by growing food on the temple or sourcing fresh produce from devotee's gardens as first preference.</li> </ul>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• For the sake of pujari, adequate groceries such as oil, frozen vegetable (if freezer used), canned items like tomato paste etc. should be kept for cooking and distribution daily. Alternatively consider sourcing or storing dried vegetables like sun-dried tomatoes, dehydrated vegetables etc.</li> </ul>
<b>B</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>Deity Protection Strategy (On-site)</b>
		<b><i>Rationale</i></b>
		In some extreme instances the deities would have to stored away for safety if this is the best choice otherwise refer to section B5 below.
		<b><u>Steps</u></b>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify a safe room or area or basement or rooftop that could be used for storing the deities.</li> </ul>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consider making the room fireproof or war-proof and keep a fire extinguisher in the room.</li> </ul>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure large boxes and blankets that can fit the deities is kept in the room in advance.</li> </ul>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Where applicable ensure the location has enough strong locks to prevent easy access by outsiders - buy these in advance.</li> </ul>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• As per the deity standards, gently take the deities off the altar.</li> </ul>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Replace the altar with pictures to avoid explaining why the altar is empty.</li> </ul>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cover the deities in warm clothing or as necessary.</li> </ul>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Place the deities in necessary covering - boxes, blankets or what is best suited per your circumstance to avoid any damage.</li> </ul>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure the deities can breathe (holes in boxes) and make them as comfortable as possible under the circumstances.</li> </ul>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hide the deities in the room and ensure the room has adequate guise like other boxes etc so they cannot be found easily.</li> </ul>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Apply similar processes for hiding the deities' jewellery in a separate box.</li> </ul>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Under extreme instances the jewellery can be given up to invaders if required but the deities' location should not be disclosed.</li> </ul>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It may be required that sometimes the deities would have to be hidden away underground</li> </ul>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This extreme exit plan must be designed in advance with your temple president and other relevant devotees if risks are high.</li> </ul>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• When the disaster reverses to normality, the temple president should arrange for the deities to be taken back to the altar soonest.</li> </ul>

<b>B</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>Deity Protection Strategy (Off-site removal and travel)</b>
		<b><i>Rationale</i></b>
		In some circumstances the deities would need to be taken to another location, if otherwise, consider section B4 above.
		<b><u>Steps</u></b>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure a suitable vehicle is arranged prior to the move.</li> </ul>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure large boxes and blankets that can fit the deities are arranged in advance.</li> </ul>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Keep enough linen boxes or suitcases on hand to pack the deity paraphernalia for easy travel.</li> </ul>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Arrange in advance possible off-site locations that could be used for interim housing of deities and their needs.</li> </ul>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure the new place to which the deities are being taken is safe and clean.</li> </ul>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• As per the deity standards, gently take the deities off the altar.</li> </ul>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure the deities are extremely comfortable during the travel.</li> </ul>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pack as much extra outfits for the deities as circumstances allow.</li> </ul>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pack all the related paraphernalia as neatly and orderly as possible.</li> </ul>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• When travelling ensure food stock is taken if required.</li> </ul>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• During travel arrange necessary the necessary worship (food offerings and arati) as circumstances permit.</li> </ul>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Once at the new location, set-up the deities with much care, attention and reverence</li> </ul>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Paraphernalia are extensions of the deities and thus should be unpacked and re-ordered on arrival.</li> </ul>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure that those devotees who can continue with deity service accompany the deities and are given adequate living resources.</li> </ul>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• When the disaster reverses to normality, the temple president should arrange for the deities to be taken back to the altar soonest.</li> </ul>
<b>B</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>Hybrid Protection Strategy (Large vs small deities)</b>
		<b><i>Rationale</i></b>
		In some extreme instances the large deities would have to be kept hidden on-site and only the small deities taken off-site
		<b><u>Steps</u></b>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consider the applicable steps under B4 and B5.</li> </ul>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Minimise the impact on the situation by arranging as much help from outside devotees for the care of deities when off-site.</li> </ul>

<b>B</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>Communication planning</b>
		Typically, during a crisis, the term “your neighbours are your family” hold true. It has been found time and time again that communication lines with your neighbours, local police, local newspapers and other local officials are very helpful. They generally have direct insight into the latest events that the news shares much later and can directly help the devotees more urgently.
		<b>Steps</b>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Most neighbourhoods today have a local WhatsApp or Facebook social group for updates on events in the area – ensure the temple president or his second-in-charge is included in the group. Utilise this group to communicate positive and neutral relations with those in your neighbourhood thereby leaning on their strengths in the event of a disaster or better pulling together to help each other.</li> <li>• For example, in the instance of floods where the roads are washed away – your neighbours might assist in collating a single entry of food/necessities for the neighbourhood and you can share in that instead of trying to get food yourself which could be dangerous or not possible alone.</li> </ul>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create positive relations with your local police and municipality officials. If they play a big part around the area of the temple, consider rewarding their efforts by distributing prasadam to them or some gifts. Such relationship endeavours go a long way should the temple require help in the future from them.</li> </ul>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In the event of a disaster consider creating a WhatsApp/Facebook or similar social platform group with key stakeholders to share and receive the latest updates on the happenings of the disaster, to track safety and well-being and communicate the temple’s needs to ensure the optimal safety for the deities.</li> </ul>
<b>B</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>Other Considerations</b>
		<b>Rationale</b>
		In some unique circumstances apply the below
		<b>Steps</b>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure women, children and old persons are taken to safety first.</li> <li>• Keep spare cash and cash reserves in the bank on hand in emergency.</li> <li>• Keep passports and other important documents safely on hand.</li> <li>• Have the spare keys of the temple kept with the right persons.</li> <li>• Keep adequate fuel and gas reserves on hand.</li> <li>• Create a WhatsApp group that shares up to date movement and information both ways where possible.</li> <li>• For financial help consider the use of a GoFundMe account etc to ask for financial assistance.</li> <li>• Report any information to the local GBC and local authorities especially in instances of extreme theft and protest action.</li> </ul>
<b>B</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>Sustainability Planning</b>
		“Growing your own plants, is like printing your own money”. We encourage all temples to develop ways of becoming self-sustainable so that even in the event of a disaster they are empowered to continue with their daily operations. This expands to other dependants such as power and water as we are seeing a global trend whereby such resources are becoming 1) Expensive 2) Unavailable 3) Undependable consistently

<b>Steps</b>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Power:</b> consider developing alternative renewable energy sources in your area like installing solar panels if the area is very sunny; wind farms if the area is very windy or hydro-powered plants if a waterfall permits. This will allow for consistent power. Do check with your local government if you receive a subsidy for installing solar panels or renewable energy.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Water:</b> consider digging a well in your area to access consistent water for watering the gardens or flushing the toilets or cleaning the temple as such water may not be drinkable but still useable. Consider collecting rainwater in various ways such as roofing gutters into storage tanks or ponds for future use.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Flower gardens:</b> we encourage the temple president to consider growing their own flowers as a community project or devotional service offering for those devotees interested or experienced in gardening. This way there is constant supply of flowers to serve the deities especially if inflation goes up.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Food gardens:</b> there are many tools nowadays easily available to teach one how to grow food from leftover seeds or fruit/vegetable cuttings on YouTube, Google, Instagram etc. The easiest plants to start off with are simple herbs as they are low maintenance. Once confidence increases by learning about sunlight available in your area and composting needs, one could invest in growing many more local fruit and vegetables, and even grains.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Composting:</b> all leftover vegetable and fruit cuttings/peels, flowers, prasadam need not be thrown away, they can be converted into the best quality compost for gardening. "Bokashi" is a Japanese way of using these leftovers to create compost in just two weeks. The "Bokashi" bran is made with yeast and cane sugar to speed up the process. Alternatively, in India buttermilk and fallen dried leaves from trees are mixed with the leftovers to create compost in two weeks as well. This compost is easy to make and can be used in the temple's own garden if necessary or sold to the local garden community or local nursery in exchange for Lakshmi to further sustain the temple.</li> </ul>



## Section C - Contact Details

Populate this in advance so it is readily available in the event of a disaster.  
Update as necessary

	Number	Alternative Number	Email Address or Address
Police			
Municipal			
Zonal Rep			
Temple President			
Key Devotee (add name) 1			
Key Devotee (add name) 2			
Key Devotee (add name) 3			
Key Supplier (add name) 1			
Key Supplier (add name) 2			
Key Supplier (add name) 3			
Other			

