

ADOPTED 

The first-ever UN
resolution on

Global Drowning
Prevention



Declaration of World Drowning Prevention Day: A journey from Bangladesh to UN general assembly

28 April 2021 was one of the historic days for Bangladesh in the United Nations general assembly. Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Bangladesh to UN, Rabab Fatima proposed a new resolution on drowning prevention, acknowledging the issue for the first time in its 75-year history. The UN General Assembly has unanimously adopted the resolution and declared a new UN day on 25 July to celebrate World Drowning Prevention Day. The UN resolution was co-led by Ireland and co-sponsored by a total of 81 UN member states.

It recognizes that drowning affects all countries and provides a framework for actively taking action to reduce the unacceptably high number of drowning deaths. Rabab Fatima said, "The Bangladesh government recognizes the urgency to have the resolution and generate a greater political commitment to the prevention of drowning. We have reduced child mortality rates globally.

However, if we cannot bring death from drowning to 'zero', our success in primary healthcare, and therefore, achievement of SDG 3 will remain unaccomplished".

Cordially welcoming the resolution, Dr Aminur Rahman, Deputy Executive Director of (CIPRB), said, "the UN resolution will encourage member states to adopt specific drowning prevention initiatives based on their country-specific needs". In addition, the adaptation of the national drowning prevention strategy, which was led by the Bangladesh government with a specific focus on reducing preventable causes of child drowning deaths in Bangladesh, will speed up.

The CIPRB and PROJECT Bhasa-2 team will take the opportunity to convey gratitude to the United Nations, The Ireland Government and The Royal National Lifeboat Institution for their combined contribution.



On 28 April 2021, Dr. Aminur Rahman, Deputy Executive Director of the CIPRB, was requested to participate as a panelist on a prominent news program. In response to the moderator, Dr. Amin applauded the UN resolution and provided an overview of drowning statistics in Bangladesh. As preventing drowning in Bangladesh required a multi-sectoral effort, this resolution will guide to effective collaboration, Dr. Amin added.

'Drowning is a neglected but preventable child health issue'-

Dr. Aminur Rahman

In collaboration with Global Health Advocacy Incubator (GHAI), Campaign for Popular Education (CAMPE), Bangladesh ECD Network (BEN), Society for Media and Suitable Human Communication Techniques (SoMaSHTe) and the Centre for Injury Prevention and Research, Bangladesh (CIPRB) had jointly organized a virtual national dialogue on 'Child drowning prevention' on 22nd June 2021 to accelerate the movement of preventing child mortality by drowning. The State Minister for Women and Children Affairs Ms. Fazilatun Nessa Indira, MP was present as the Chief Guest at the event. Around 225 guests from the national and local government organizations, National policymakers, INGOs, NGOs, educational institutions, different media attended the meeting.

The Deputy Executive Director of CIPRB, Dr. Aminur Rahman presented the keynote paper- 'Drowning: A neglected but preventable child

health issue'. To address the first-ever drowning prevention day, Dr Amin presented the drowning related statistics of Bangladesh highlighting the major causes and proven prevention measures at the event. In his presentation speech, he emphasized that the Bangladesh government has started to address drowning prevention, but the national policy and national plan of action for drowning prevention is yet to be adopted in Bangladesh. The latest UN resolution will accelerate that process. In response, Ms Fazilatun Nessa Indira, State Minister for Women and Children Affairs stated that "rather than creating new programs, child drowning prevention efforts should be integrated into the existing mother and child development programs". Kelly Larsen, director of Bloomberg Philanthropies' Drowning Prevention Program, praised the government efforts for assisting to establish a national drowning prevention plan.

Case Studies

Case 1

On May 15, 2021, Lucky Begum and Taj Uddin lost their three-year-old child Monira (pseudonym). Lucky, the poor mother, was unwell and fell asleep, leaving Monira to play with her elder sister (11). Both were having fun in their neighbor's yard. After a couple of minutes, when one of the neighbors was walking by the pond, she noticed something floating in it. Her subconscious mind alerted her that the hovering item was not usual. She dashed forward and leaped into the water. And she was correct; it was a human body, and it belonged to none other than the infant Monira. Her skin was as cold as ice and as soft as a sleeping baby's. When Lucky Begum woke up, her baby falls asleep for the rest of her life. Monira died as a result of drowning, but there was another cause for this. There was no one to watch over Monira and her elder sister, who was also a child, while they were playing. And the accident happened just like a hundred other typical drownings.

Case 2

Khadija Begum, one of the Anchal Assistants, and a farmer, Manik, lost their kid Mabilia (pseudonym) on June 2, 2021. Kadija was six months pregnant and had a lot of household work to do; as usual, she was too exhausted to handle the fickleness of a four-year-old infant Mabilia. On that particular day, Kadija was dizzy and took a break on their balcony. Her husband was not present at home at that moment. Marufa was scurrying around here in the blink of an eye, causing havoc. Khadija didn't realize when she fell asleep because of her physical condition. But, it was too late when her brain rang the bell to prevent Mabilia from drowning. Kadija discovered her baby Mabilia lying in the pond, dead. There was still a glimpse of hope in Khadia's thoughts, and she brought Mabilia to the nearest hospital soon after being rescued from the pond. However, the on-call doctor verified her death.



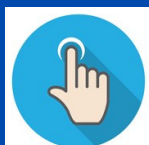
The pond where Mabilia (pseudonym) drowned

The occurrences described above occurred in the Taltali Upazila of Barguna. Overall, drowning deaths among youngsters are on the rise in Bangladesh. All educational institutions, including the daycare facilities, have been closed since March 2020 due to the nationwide COVID-19 lockdown. As a result, youngsters face a significant danger of drowning. The PROJECT Bhasa-2's daycare centers known as 'Anchal' are also closed to prevent COVID-19 infection in the project sites. Unfortunately, six more Anchal enrolled children died in this quarter in the project area, including Monira and Mabilia (April 21-June 21).

Dr. Aminur Rahman was invited by the National Public Radio, Washington D.C., USA

Dr. Aminur Rahman was invited by National Public Radio in Washington, D.C., USA, following the announcement of the historic resolution on drowning prevention day. Dr. Amin discussed some relevant questions about drowning prevention. He stated that, as we all know drowning is a silent epidemic, it requires the same level of attention as the COVID-19 pandemic since

it is a global problem that has gone unnoticed for a long time. Multiple hurdles exist in lower-middle-income countries such as Bangladesh to preventing drowning deaths. However, low-cost solutions exist, and CIPRB is a pioneer in setting those examples in rural areas. He went on to say that while the national policy is yet to be introduced, the UN resolution will accelerate the process.



10 action points of the UN resolution regarding Drowning Prevention

(a) Appoint a national focal point for drowning prevention

(b) Develop a national drowning prevention plan, containing a set of measurable targets according to their needs and priorities, including as part of wider national health plans, policies and programmes

(c) Develop drowning prevention programming in line with World Health Organization recommended interventions, namely, barriers, supervision, swim skills, rescue and resuscitation training, boating regulation and managing flood risk and resilience

(d) Ensure enactment and effective enforcement of water safety laws, across all relevant sectors, in particular in the areas of health, education, transportation and disaster risk reduction, where appropriate, and consider establishing appropriate and proportionate regulations where they do not yet exist

(e) Include drowning within civil registration and vital statistics registers and aggregate all drowning mortality data into national estimates

(f) Promote drowning prevention public awareness and behavior-change campaigns

(g) Encourage integration of drowning prevention within existing disaster risk reduction programmes, especially in communities at risk of flooding and coastal inundation, including through international, regional and bilateral cooperation

(h) Support international cooperation by sharing lessons learned, experiences and best practices, within and among regions;

(i) Promote research and development of innovative drowning prevention tools and technology, and to promote capacity-building through international cooperation, in particular for developing countries;

(j) Consider the introduction of water safety, swimming and first aid lessons as part of school curricula, consistent with the Member State's governance framework for education;

PROJECT Bhasa-2 has come forward with mass awareness-raising

The regular operations of PROJECT Bhasa-2 have been halted due to an increase in COVID-19 cases. PROJECT Bhasa-2 has adopted the alternative plan of activities to raise public awareness about the need of preserving COVID-19 preventive safety, reducing child drowning risks, and ensuring guaranteeing child welfare and early development at home. The COVID-19 response campaigns were implemented with the help of community stakeholders and volunteers from the three project sites: Kalapara, Betagi, and Taltali. Loudspeaker campaigns, religious leader campaigns, TV Network scrolling campaigns, and SMS campaigns are all part of the adoption programmes.



Loudspeaker campaign at an important market place



Religious leaders are disseminating messages in different religious gatherings (Mosques, Temples and Churches)

Supporting networking agency at Betagi

PROJECT Bhasa-2 supports to a network agency Red Crescent Society for strengthening the capacity of their human resources as part of ensuring sustainability. From CIPRB, Mr. Motaher Hossain, Area Coordinator, PROJECT Bhasa-2, Betagi Upazila, supported with session facilitation on Drowning prevention and First Response in the scheduled training organized by the Bangladesh Red Crescent Society's. The titled of the training was 'Capacity Development Training Camp-2021'. A total of 50 volunteers were participated and pledged to work for raising awareness about drowning prevention in their community.



The Area Coordination is conducting the session

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Lifeboats

Drowning is preventable



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