



Child Drowning in Bangladesh: Fact Sheet

Drowning is the leading cause of death in children in Bangladesh, and claims the lives of approximately 50 children per day. Despite this drowning is a neglected issue in the country. The International Drowning Research Centre - Bangladesh (IDRC-B) conducts research to develop effective, sustainable drowning interventions that are appropriate for Bangladesh and countries with similar social, cultural and risk environments.

The global scenario

- Drowning is the third leading cause of unintentional injury death globally.
- Over 96% of drowning deaths occur in low and middle – income countries.
- The rate of fatal drowning in low and middle – income countries is six times higher than in high-income countries. In Asia alone, the drowning rate is 20 times higher than in developed countries.

(Source: World Health Organisation, 2010)

The scenario in Bangladesh

The geography of Bangladesh has established water as a common feature of the landscape. Ponds and ditches (small holes that fill with water during the rainy season) are in abundance in both rural and urban areas. Open water bodies in Bangladesh are used for bathing, washing, drinking, agriculture, raising fish and for children to play in. Closed vessels such as large buckets and troughs are used for porting, cooking and water for livestock; however these water sources are also responsible for 18,000 annual deaths by drowning in children under 18 years old.

- Drowning is the leading cause of death in children aged 1-17 years in Bangladesh.
- Age is a major risk factor for drowning. The highest rates of fatal drowning are found in the 1-4 year age group, when children start to walk and venture away from supervision.
- The age pattern for near-drowning is nearly identical to that of fatal drowning, however rates of near drowning in Bangladesh are several times higher than those of fatal drowning (118/100,000 near drowning; 28.6/100,000 drowning) among children 1-17 years.
- Rates of drowning are higher in rural populations, most likely due to the relatively high number of water sources in rural areas compared to urban areas.
- Drowning is preventable. The International Drowning Research Centre - Bangladesh is currently implementing a number of successful drowning prevention pilot interventions.

(Source: Bangladesh Health and Injury Survey, 2003)

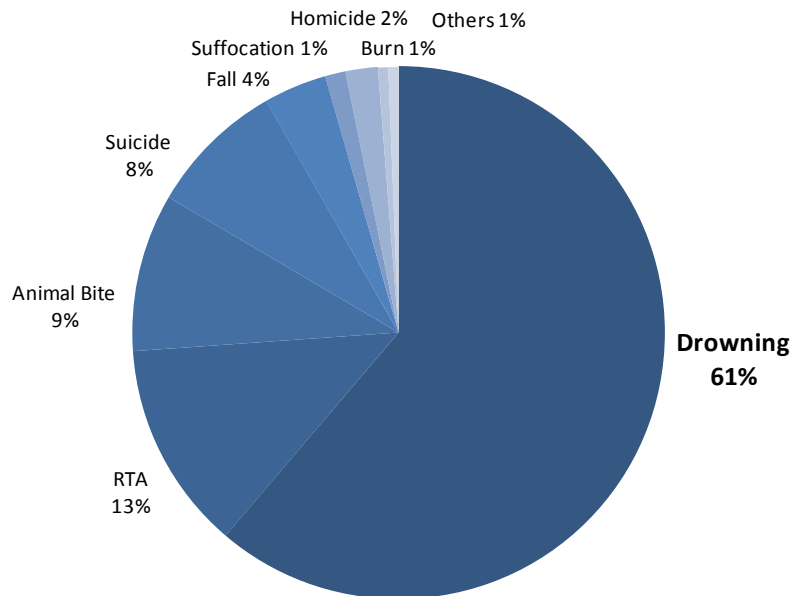
Traditional Responses to a Drowning

Traditional first aid and resuscitation responses to drowning are often counterproductive, and in some cases may reduce the chances of survival if the child is breathing but unconscious. Traditional first aid practices include:

- The body of the rescued child is laid straight on the ground and the whole body is rubbed and covered by ashes and/or salt. It is thought that the ash/salt can absorb the water and keep the body warm.
- Rotten food (commonly rotten banana leaf), uncooked eggs or 'kochur dogra' (arum stem) are forced into the child's mouth to induce vomiting which it is believed will clear out water from the stomach.

Statistics

- In some age groups drowning is the single leading cause of death and disability, and a significant cause of disability in all age groups in Bangladesh. The peak age group for drowning is 1-4 years and then rapidly declines as age increases.

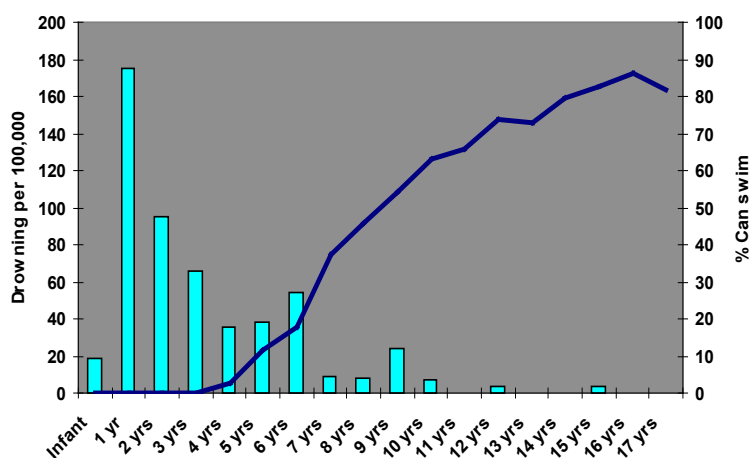


Leading causes of death in children aged 1-4		
	Cause	Rate (per 100,000)
1	Drowning	86.3
2	Pneumonia	75.5
3	Malnutrition	53.9

- In children aged five and under, over 80% of fatal drownings occur in closed vessels, ditches and ponds less than 20 metres away from the home. In children over five drownings occur further away from the home, usually whilst swimming without adult supervision.
- Almost all fatal drownings in Bangladesh occur during the day, particularly between 9am and 2pm when parents and supervisors are preparing food, cleaning the house or working.
- Amongst children over four years most of those who drown cannot swim. Swimming skills appear to be highly protective for drowning prevention.

Proportion of total injury deaths by each different injury type (children aged 1-17 years)
(Source: Bangladesh Health and Injury Survey, 2003)

(Source: Bangladesh Health and Injury Survey, 2003)



Rates of fatal drowning and percentage of children that can swim, by age
(Source: Bangladesh Health and Injury Survey, 2003)

Prevention Strategies

Target	Intervention
6-18 months	• In the home, playpens protect children age 6-18 months when their mother is busy with household chores and can't provide direct supervision.
1 - 5 years	• Anchal's (Integrated Child Survival and Development Centres) for children under five years old provide a place of safety during the peak hours of the day while their primary care givers are busy outside the home.
4 years +	• Swimming programmes for children over four years old that teach survival swimming techniques, safe rescue, and basic resuscitation measures.
School Children	• Safety curriculum specifically designed to promote community based drowning risk reduction is taught in schools.
Community	• Social autopsy programmes: In Bangladesh IDRC-B staff visit communities where drowning deaths have occurred and discuss why it happened and how the community can reduce future risks.

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