Welcome
Right around the world, natural disasters involving water have inundated many countries in the past few months, causing extensive damage and immense loss of life.

The March 10 earthquake and subsequent tsunami in Japan shocked the world as the death toll continued to climb for weeks and the destruction in coastal cities and villages of the country became evident.

Australia, Sri Lanka and Brazil experienced horrific flooding in some of the worst natural disasters to hit the regions. Hundreds of people were killed and thousands left homeless as flood waters and landslides ripped through areas of the countries. IDRC-B offers our condolences to all those affected by these floods and the Japanese earthquake and tsunami.

These events are a reminder that water is a major part of our lives and can rise and become deadly at any time. IDRC-B is continually working to raise awareness of the importance of water safety in low and middle income countries, especially since it’s often those countries that are at a higher risk of flooding.

While it’s impossible to prevent flooding from occurring, the ability to prepare for such a disaster and be able to survive is so important. With over 100,000 graduates in the Bangladesh SwimSafe programme to date, IDRC-B is taking the necessary steps to prevent such drowning in Bangladesh – especially with its vulnerability to flooding.

At IDRC-B, it’s been a busy few months as all our research projects have moved along rapidly and we are busy with planning, implementation and data collection for a variety of projects. Two portable pools are now up in Dhaka and will be tested for their effectiveness in teaching water survival skills, training has just begun for the CPR/First Responder initiative in Raiganj and the Model Centre has already been training Anchal Mas.

The team is also busy preparing for the upcoming World Conference on Drowning Prevention to be held in Danang, Vietnam in May 2011. The conference will bring together world leaders in drowning prevention, and provide an opportunity for us to present the issues and interventions relevant to Bangladesh and the developing world.

If you have any feedback about any of our projects, please don’t hesitate to get in touch. We thank you for your support.

Dr. Aminur Rahman - Director
International Drowning Research Centre - Bangladesh

IDRC-B hosts International Workshop on Drowning Prevention
In December 2010, IDRC-B held its first international workshop to look at ways of reducing child drowning across Asia.

The ‘Preventing Child Drowning in Asia: Key elements of a regional strategy’ workshop was held in Dhaka from 4-6 December and involved many key researchers and policy makers in drowning prevention from across the region.

Participants were involved in a field visit to working Anchal and SwimSafe centres in the rural area of Raiganj (above) to see current CIPRB child drowning interventions, followed by a lively discussion of suggestions and questions on ways forward to reduce the child drowning toll in Asia.

The key recommendations arising from the discussion include:

1. Advocacy at regional, national and community levels
2. Resource mobilization
3. Initiate a collaborative approach
4. Research to develop evidence based interventions
5. Community involvement
6. Capacity building

Rachel Payne (below) from AusAID opened the workshop
For over 50 years, CPR (Cardio Pulmonary Resuscitation) has been proven to be an effective intervention in the prevention of drowning in high income countries; however the effectiveness of CPR has not been researched in low income countries.

The IDRC-B is currently conducting a research study into the effectiveness of teaching CPR skills to people in a rural indigenous community to reduce the number drowning fatalities and gather evidence on the feasibility, scalability and effectiveness of a First Responder network.

The first stage of the project will be to research the feasibility of teaching CPR in a low-income environment. This will be done by training community members in the project area of Raiganj in CPR and First Aid. A total of 2,400 people – including illiterate people - across 20 villages will be trained consisting of 1,800 adolescents and 600 key stakeholders such as Anchal Mas, school teachers, community members and Community Swimming Instructors.

The key issues that this study will address and are designed to provide evidence on are the feasibility of teaching CPR to low literacy and illiterate people and the retention period of these skills, developing a First Response network and testing the effectiveness of CPR in reducing drowning rates in rural Bangladesh.

IDRC-B is also developing training materials to train community first responders. This includes bystanders training manual, trainers’ guide, video and training aids.

The study commenced in March 2011 and results are expected by 2012.

Training of trainers session kicks off research project

As part of the research initiative, the IDRC-B has trained four Master Trainers in First Aid and CPR skills to then pass on these skills to community members in the Raiganj area.

The trainers completed an intensive course at the IDRC-B offices on the 15th and 16th of March and showed great proficiency in their new skills. Two went on to train their first batch of 11 students in Raiganj on the 19th and 20th of March, under provisional supervision from IDRC-B staff and the training is continuing.

The aim of the first stage of the project is to measure the retention period of skills to see if it is feasible to teach CPR in a rural context.

IDRC-B welcomes community involvement in research through awareness meeting

As part of the upcoming ‘First Responder’ research initiative, IDRC-B held a ‘CPR and First Responder Community Awareness Meeting’ on 15 February to let key community members of Raiganj know about the project and keep them involved in the development process.

17 local community representatives including the Mayor, Upazila representatives and Village Injury Prevention Committee members were present and participants had a chance to contribute suggestions and comments at the meeting. It was suggested that village police, school teachers, students and scouts should be included in the training programme.

Following the meeting, all participants showed great enthusiasm about the project and agreed to raise awareness in the Raiganj area to encourage people to participate.

Technical meeting on First Responder project

On 18 February, IDRC-B met with various medical and health experts to discuss the technical and ethical issues surrounding the ‘First Responder’ research initiative.

At the review meeting, participants heard about the current situation in rural Bangladesh and how drowning victims almost never receive CPR from bystanders. A lack of resources, awareness and education also contributes to the rate of drowning deaths.

Issues discussed at the meeting include:

- When to start CPR?
- How long should CPR continue?
- When should the victim be transported to a medical facility?
- Guidelines to perform CPR and the acceptance of this method
- Certification of CPR qualification
Removing barriers to water safety and survival

The SwimSafe classes in rural Bangladesh have many benefits for the children who participate. They learn how to move through water, how to rescue someone in water if they get into trouble and the skills to survive should they fall into water.

For Fazila, the SwimSafe classes provided many more benefits and opened her world to new possibilities and confidence.

The 13-year-old lost her arm in a farming accident when she was four years old. When she was playing with her siblings, a belt came loose in a rice machine. When it snapped off it struck her on the upper arm, which as a result, had to be amputated.

“I used to feel different from the other kids. I was born normal with both my arms, but the accident took one of my arms. I used to feel alone at home and didn’t have many friends,” she says.

Four years ago, the local Community Swimming Instructor (CSI) came to her family’s house in Dhubil, Raiganj and asked her parents if Fazila would like to learn how to swim. Although nervous to begin with, Fazila soon became confident in the water.

“I wanted to learn how to swim because other children could swim. Now I can swim too. In the rainy season and floods a lot of children drown and this scared me, so I wanted to be able to save myself from drowning.” Fazila says.

“After joining the class, I realised that I am not different from the other children and I made many friends. The SwimSafe training period took a little longer than normal for me to complete because of my disability, but now that I have achieved it I feel I can do anything!”

Fazila’s father says he used to be worried that his children would drown in the rainy season or floods, as there are many ponds around his house. He says sending Fazila to the lessons was the right decision and he has seen many changes in his daughter.

“I used to watch very carefully from the bank when she was learning how to swim in the pond and worried she might drown. But now I see that she is very good in the water. These skills have made her a more confident person as now she can swim just like any of the other children. I’m now also sending my other children to the SwimSafe lessons so they can also learn how to swim.”

Fazila actively encourages other children in her village who have disabilities to learn how to swim so they can potentially save their own lives.

“I want to become a swimming instructor and teach other people, especially girls, like me and show them that learning how to swim is achievable by everyone.”

Epidemiological Association of Bangladesh (EPAB) and IDRC-B jointly organize seminar on drowning

Drowning prevention experts from Bangladesh and Sweden met at IDRC-B on 23 February 2011 to share knowledge and experiences in child drowning prevention in each country.

Chaired by Professor Mahmudur Rahman - the Vice President of the EPAB, participants at the seminar heard the situation in Bangladesh from IDRC-B’s Director Dr Aminur Rahman, and Professor Staffan Jonson from Karlstad University spoke about the drowning rates in Sweden. National Professor M.R. Khan was present as chief guest.

It was noted in the discussion that more research is needed into drowning prevention in Bangladesh. IDRC-B were congratulated for their pioneering contributions to the field.

Second phase of risk taking behaviour study commences

IDRC-B recently conducted training for the data collectors of the risk taking behaviour research project, with the collectors now in the field obtaining data from both urban and rural areas.

Researchers are exploring the risk-taking behaviour in water of SwimSafe graduates and comparing them to children who have not participated in the programme. The results are expected in time for the World Conference on Drowning Prevention in May.

IDRC-B Director receives PhD in drowning prevention in Bangladesh

Dr Aminur Rahman has received a PhD in child drowning prevention in developing countries from Karolinska Institutet in Sweden.

Dr Aminur’s thesis ‘A Community Based Child Drowning Prevention Programme in Bangladesh: A model for low income countries’ was the first of it’s kind ever completed. The award recognizes Dr Aminur’s contributions to the field over the last 8 years and the team at IDRC-B are very proud of his achievement.
A Model Centre for Drowning Prevention

Another intervention currently being prepared and soon to be launched is the Model Centre based in the project area of Raiganj.

Once completed, the Model Centre will provide a venue for the systematic study of drowning interventions in rural villages, such as Anchal and portable pools. The study will provide evidence on the acceptability by the community, effectiveness in drowning prevention and sustainability over time.

The Model Anchal is already in use at IDRC-B's newly established Model Centre

The first initiative of the Model Centre to commence is the Anchal Programme. The Anchal centre will explore the capacity for increasing sustainability in the community and looking at funding alternatives such as cost-sharing and private sector sponsorships. It will also look at ways of increasing schools attendance rates amongst Anchal children and increasing academic performance amongst Anchal children.

IDRC-B Request for Donations of CPR Manikins

The IDRC-B are in desperate need of adult and child manikins for their new CPR project. We would greatly welcome any donations from organizations who have unused working manikins. Any new manikins would be immediately put to use and will assist us in training 2,400 people in CPR in rural Bangladesh.

We are also interested in hearing from organizations who have developed their own low-cost manikins.

If you are able to help please contact Tom Mecrow, Research Fellow, at thomasmecrow@yahoo.co.uk

Portable Pools Established in Dhaka

To test their feasibility as a tool in the prevention of child drowning in urban Dhaka, two large portable pools have been set up by IDRC-B.

The pools – one in Mirpur and one at a school in Agargaon and measuring 6 metres by 12.5 metres – are the first of their kind to be trialled in a Bangladesh setting.

Currently, there are limited options in Dhaka for children to learn how to swim. This can prove deadly when children who are raised in an urban setting visit their rural family homes or holiday by water.

Lessons have already begun for local children aged 4 to 10 in the Mirpur pool and lessons will commence at the school in April 2011. Local community members have also be trained as Community Swimming Instructors (CSIs) to teach the children survival skills.

CIPRB’s Dr Jahangir Hossain is coordinating the establishment of the pools with guidance from Tarina Rubin of TASC. He says while portable pools are in use in Vietnam and Thailand, this is the first time they will be trialled for use in Bangladesh, which has a significantly higher rate of drowning. He expects the pools to prove successful in the reduction of child drowning in the country, as has been the case in South East Asia.

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Children participating in a SwimSafe lesson at the Mirpur portable pool

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