



Welcome

The International Drowning Research Centre - Bangladesh (IDRC-B) was established in response to The Alliance of Safe Children (TASC) estimate that 350,000 children drown every year in Asia.

In Bangladesh, drowning is the leading killer of children aged 1-17, claiming more lives than infectious disease, malnutrition or diarrhea.

The Centre for Injury Prevention and Research, Bangladesh (CIPRB) along with its partners Royal Life Saving Society Australia (RLSSA) and TASC identified the need for awareness of the burden and preventability of child drowning and recognized that the necessary large scale interventions have not been developed in Bangladesh and similar countries.

As a result, CIPRB, RLSSA and TASC, along with AusAID established IDRC-B to prevent fatal and non-fatal drowning.

The centre conducts research to develop effective, sustainable drowning interventions that are appropriate for Bangladesh and countries with similar social, cultural and risk environments.

The primary research agenda is to investigate, design and distribute the findings of successful, scalable drowning interventions nationally and internationally.

Other goals include:

- Develop and implement a strategy for capacity-building and knowledge-transfer to community and governmental agencies across Bangladesh and the region
- Increase the general public's awareness in regards to the factors that lead to drowning deaths and the safety measures that can be taken to prevent them
- Develop and implement drowning prevention programmes applicable to homes, schools and in communities in countries with similar social, cultural and risk environments
- Facilitate a network of researchers and practitioners working in the field of drowning from different research institutions and civil society with an emphasis on the South Asia Region, to create a global research community on drowning
- Contribute to the World Conference on Drowning Prevention in 2011 held in Danang, Vietnam.

IDRC-B research in Bangladesh

Feasibility and scalability of portable swimming pools for survival swim training

Three years experience in survival swimming training in ponds has shown it to be feasible, but with limitations of season and water quality. These are an impediment to scaling up survival swim training. IDRC-B is testing the use of portable swimming pools in combination with ponds as a potential solution. A program is underway to test the reliability and utility for survival swim training.

Impact of SwimSafe on Child Risk-taking Behaviors

Since 2005, the CIPRB SwimSafe program, co-implemented with BRAC and CMES has taught 100,000 children in Bangladesh survival swimming. This study explores the risk-taking behavior in water for children participating in the SwimSafe program and compares them with children of similar ages who have not participated in SwimSafe. It aims to determine whether there is an increase in risky behaviours related to water as a result of the SwimSafe program (more on back page).

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Developing a community-based first response system for drowning prevention

This explores the feasibility and effectiveness of cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) for drowning rescue and resuscitation in rural communities. It aims to establish whether CPR can be taught and retained in low literacy environments, and if so, whether it can result in a reduction in drowning mortality rates.

Getting familiar with water in a SwimSafe class



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Official launch ceremony of IDRC-B

With 50 children drowning each day in Bangladesh, the official launch of the International Drowning Research Centre - Bangladesh on 4 August 2010 was a special day for Bangladesh and the thousands of children at risk of drowning in this silent epidemic.

Approximately 200 guests attended the launch ceremony to witness the inauguration of the world's first drowning research centre. The IDRC-B was established by the Centre for Injury Prevention and Research, Bangladesh (CIPRB) and is an initiative of its partners Royal Life Saving Society Australia (RLSSA), The Alliance for Safe Children (TASC) and the Australian Agency for International Development (AusAID).

The State Minister for Women and Children Affairs Dr Shirin Sharmin Chowdhury was chief guest of the launching ceremony and spoke about how a greater awareness is needed around such tragic deaths amongst children and research focusing on action and results could be the key to reducing the child drowning rate.

CIPRB's Executive Director Dr AKM Fazlur Rahman chaired the event, and Dr Aminur Rahman, Director of IDRC-B, Justin Scarr from Royal Life Saving Society Australia and Dr Michael Linnan from The Alliance for Safe Children were keynote speakers.

Also on hand to launch the centre was special guests MD Ishaque Hosain Talukder MP, Dr Justin Lee – Australian High Commissioner to Bangladesh, Serguei Diordista of WHO, Carel de Rooy of UNICEF and Dr Saidur Rahman Mashreky – epidemiologist of CIPRB.



Dr Shirin Sharmin Chowdhury, State Minister for Women and Children Affairs, accepts recognition of appreciation award from IDRC-B's Dr AKM Fazlur Rahman.



Dr. Justin Lee, Australian High Commissioner to Bangladesh, speaks at the launch ceremony

World Conference on Drowning Prevention - Vietnam 2011



From May 11-13 2011, Vietnam will host the World Conference on Drowning Prevention in Danang. The conference will bring together world leaders in water safety research, policy and practice to focus attention on the global burden of drowning, especially the epidemic of drowning in developing countries.

Hosted by the International Lifesaving Federation (ILS) and supported by AusAID and other sponsors, the conference will explore themes including drowning research, child drowning intervention, emergency response and medical treatment, advances in lifesaving, swimming and water safety, disasters and climate change, regional perspectives, lifesaving sport and development, partnerships and collaborations and activities and occupations.

IDRC-B's Executive Director Dr AKM Fazlur Rahman has been named as an Ambassador for the conference.

Early bird registration closes on 31 December 2010. For more information and to register for the conference, visit www.worldconferenceondrowningprevention.org.

31 December 2010: Last day for early bird registration for World Conference on Drowning Prevention

AusAID supports the work of IDRC-B

The IDRC-B welcomes the vital support of the Australian aid agency AusAID to enable us to continue our critical work in reducing child drowning in Bangladesh.

AusAID has committed to providing financial support for the next 3 years, and this assistance ensures the ability for IDRC-B to develop and implement sustainable preventative measures to intervene in the epidemic of child drowning in Bangladesh and across Asia.

Australians also have a close association with water, and Australia has implemented a number of successful intervention measures to reduce their child drowning rate. The IDRC-B work will have a major focus on adapting those principles for the context of low resource settings.

Dr Justin Lee – the Australian High Commissioner to Bangladesh – was on hand to launch the International Drowning Research Centre - Bangladesh. He says he is delighted to have Australian expertise involved in the establishment of the world's first drowning research centre.

"The Royal Life Saving Society Australia, with their long history in developing a safe aquatic culture in Australia, and with Australian Government support, are now bringing valuable skills and passion to preventing drowning and injury, internationally."

Dr Aminur Rahman, Director of the IDRC-B, says the centre is grateful for the support of AusAID and looks forward to working together to achieve a reduction in child drowning in the region.

Everything can change in an instant

It's every parent's worst nightmare. For Rowshon Ara, of North Kochikata in Manohardi, Bangladesh, the nightmare of losing her child became a reality when her 21-month old son wandered from the family home and drowned in a nearby pond.

5 years later, Rowshon is still in deep pain over the loss of her child Rajon. She still weeps when she visits the site that claimed her son's young life. She recalls that on that day, back in 2005, she went to clean a bowl to feed Rajon. She was gone no longer than 10 minutes and on her return, he had gone.

A quick search with community members soon revealed Rajon's body in a local pond, just 50 metres from the house.

Traditional first aid was then administered to Rajon, which included spinning him around and rubbing his body with ashes to bring out the water from his little body. He was declared dead after being taken to the local hospital.

When Rajon was born, Rowshon quit her job as a nurse to care for son.



Rowshon with Rimi (left) and Rifat at the Anchal

"I miss my child every second. He was big and cute, and I look at his picture often. He was my first child and I even left my job which involved saving people to raise him. But I couldn't save him."

Rowshon and her husband now have two more children. Haunted by the tragedy of Rajon, Rowshon's 4 year old daughter Rimi lives with Rowshon's mother so that Rowshon can properly supervise her 3 year old son Rifat. Once a week, Rowshon makes the one hour journey to see Rimi.

Rimi is now enrolled in the local Anchal – or integrated child development and survival centre – established by CIPRB. The 'creche' program is an injury prevention strategy that was established to enable constant supervision for children aged 1-5

years during the most vulnerable hours of the day, when mothers are usually going about their household chores.

Describing the benefits of the Anchal, Rowshon says it's a community program that keeps children in a safe haven away from many dangers. She says she wasn't aware of simple safety interventions that can be applied around the house to keep her children safe.

"We can feel relaxed and do our work at home. At the Anchal we have parent's meetings and it teaches us skills and we learn how to keep our children safe, such as being careful when we cook, putting a child in a playpen when we can't supervise them, putting a cover on top of a bucket of water and the importance of having a fence around the house," she says.

"Now I am more careful and mothers like me around my neighbourhood are more knowledgeable and careful with the safety of our kids."

Stories like Rowshon's are all too common in Bangladesh. With proper education and awareness about the all-too-common issue of injury, and in particular drowning in Bangladesh, the nightmare of losing a child can be prevented.



Drowning and the UN Millennium Development Goals - by Justin Scarr



In New York in late September, world leaders including nearly 140 heads of state, United Nations (UN) agencies and large scale donors, met at the UN Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) Summit to review progress and determine strategies as the 2015 deadline nears.

The eight MDG's – which range from halving extreme poverty to halting the spread of HIV/AIDS and providing universal primary education, all by the target date of 2015 – form a blueprint agreed to by all the world's countries and leading development institutions. They have galvanized unprecedented efforts to meet the needs of the world's poorest.

As drowning prevention advocates we eagerly search reports and media releases for mention of the silent epidemic of child drowning which has only recently been identified in countries such as Bangladesh, Cambodia and Thailand. Drowning most impacts on MDG 4 Reduce Child Mortality, and whilst much of the emphasis is currently directed towards malnutrition, access to adequate primary health care, infrastructure such as water

and sanitation, and prevention of diseases such as HIV and Malaria, the International Life Saving Federation (ILS) believes that a more concerted effort to reduce drowning in children under five is urgently needed.

Bangladesh has long been a focus of child survival efforts by the international development community, and significant resources have been applied to achieving MDG targets since the year 2000. Reports from ILS Members - The Alliance for Safe Children (TASC) and the Centre for Injury Prevention and Research, Bangladesh (CIPRB) make the case that without addressing child drowning, Bangladesh will face a significant impediment to achieving its MDG 4 target for reducing child mortality. Interventions being tested by the International Drowning Research Centre - Bangladesh at CIPRB show that drowning in children under five can be dramatically reduced.

There will be many implications and lessons for the International Life Saving Federation and drowning prevention advocates arising from the UN MDG Summit in New York, and the remaining years until 2015. Some will come in the form of lessons about how to organize ourselves to advocate our cause more effectively, others will take the form of MDG Country Programs that now realise that drowning is no longer hidden and can be prevented by relatively simple means integrated into a holistic child survival program.

This is an edited version of a piece that appears at www.ilsf.org (under 'news'). Justin Scarr is the Drowning Prevention Commissioner of the International Life Saving Federation.



IDRC-B welcomes first research fellow

The IDRC-B welcomes Tom Mecrow as he joins the team as the first IDRC-B research fellow.

Tom has a Masters in Public Health in Developing Countries from the LSTMH and completed his thesis on drowning as a global public health issue. He is also a qualified first aid and lifeguard instructor and has previously worked as a first responder with the UK ambulance service.

Tom has worked internationally as a public health volunteer in South Africa, and was also the project coordinator for The Nile Swimmers water-safety project in Sudan.

Spotlight on current research topic: Impact of SwimSafe on Child Risk-taking Behavior



There have been questions regarding the effectiveness of teaching survival swimming to reduce rates of drowning. IDRC-B has developed convincing evidence through large cohort studies that survival swimming as taught in SwimSafe is effective in preventing drowning in childhood.

Preventing drowning in children in Bangladesh will require millions of children to be trained. On a scale this large, some small portion of SwimSafe graduates could conceivably overestimate their abilities and through increases in risky swimming behaviors, increase their risk of drowning.

To address this potential issue (often called moral hazard) IDRC-B is piloting a research study to compare risk-taking behaviors in water between graduates of SwimSafe and children of similar ages who have not participated in SwimSafe. Currently the pilot has enrolled 15,000 children. The pilot will allow development of the necessary research framework and instruments. The larger study will be fielded in 2011 to provide definitive answers to the moral hazard question.

The IDRC-B is examining the effectiveness of the rescue module of the SwimSafe program, and is collecting data on rescues conducted by SwimSafe graduates. The results of the research will be used to highlight high-risk areas and suggest further areas for focus within the SwimSafe program.

Workshop to develop strategies for reducing child drowning in Asia

On December 4, the region's leading researchers and policy makers in the field of child drowning will gather in Dhaka to discuss what is needed to reduce child drowning in Bangladesh and similar countries in Asia.

The 3-day workshop 'Preventing child drowning in Asia: Key elements of a regional strategy' will also involve Bangladeshi representatives from many government agencies, development partners, national and international NGOs.

This is the first time experts will come together to discuss and develop evidence-based strategies on reducing the issues of child drowning in developing countries in Asia. Summaries of the discussions will be presented at the World Conference on Drowning Prevention in Danang.

Newsletter editors: Dr AKM Fazlur Rahman, Dr Aminur Rahman, Nahida Nusrat and Danyel Walker.

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International Drowning Research Centre
BANGLADESH

Contact Details:

B162 (ground floor), Lane 23,
New DOHS, Mohakhali, Dhaka-1206, Bangladesh

Ph: +880 2 881 4988 Fax: +880 2 881 4964

Email: nusrat@ciprb.org

More information visit: www.ciprb.org