

# Saving Lives: Drowning Prevention

Drowning is one of the leading causes of death among children globally, especially in Asia and Africa. The Global Health Advocacy Incubator (Ghai) supports governments to test and implement proven drowning prevention interventions and works with local communities and journalists to create awareness and generate demand for services to achieve sustainable drowning prevention programs.



Children learning to swim in Vietnam.

## Activities

We work with governments to develop successful national drowning prevention programs, including survival swim training and water safety education and childcare centers. This includes:

- Facilitating country ownership and handover from international donors, creating a sustainable solution.
- Designing an evidence-based pilot program, evaluate and use the proven impacts to advocate that governments scale-up, sustain and fund the program.
- Building local capacity to educate the public, media and stakeholders about the problem of drowning, effective interventions and the need to fund them.
- Raising awareness of the global burden of drowning through journalism workshops and partnering with the media.

**Focus Countries:**  
**Bangladesh, Uganda  
and Vietnam**



**90%**  
of drowning deaths occur in low- to middle-income countries



**More than  
300,000**  
people die of drowning  
each year



Drowning is the leading cause of death of **children under 5 (Vietnam)** and **under 5 (Bangladesh)**. In Uganda, young adult males have the highest drowning rates.



## Our Impact

- In **Bangladesh**, advocacy by GHAI and its partners ensured the sustainability of a community childcare program that reduced drowning deaths by 88% among children under four. The Bangladesh government took ownership of the program and budget in 2022 to support 8,000 childcare centers and survival swim lessons for 360,000 children 6-10 years old.
- In **Uganda**, GHAI and our local partners are supporting the government to develop and implement national policies to prevent drowning among high risk groups, including fisherfolk on Lake Victoria.
- In **Vietnam**, GHAI partners with the government, the World Health Organization and local experts to design, implement and sustain a national drowning prevention program. Efforts have yielded a 10-Year Action Plan on Child Drowning Prevention and a National Program integrated water safety into all school curricula. By early 2026, more than 50,000 children will be trained on water safety education and survival swimming.

**“Our team met a father whose family lives in a remote area of Vietnam. This father brings his children to the closest pool, 20 kilometers away, so they can participate in the program. He did not have a chance to learn to swim as a child and still cannot swim. He wants his daughter to learn so that he will not have to worry about her drowning when she is playing near a river or stream.”**

**– Ms. Le Thi Anh Dao, Program Manager at HueHelp Vietnam**



## Success Story

### The challenge:

In Vietnam's Dong Thap province, a study found that 89% of child drowning cases occurred in rivers and could largely be prevented through interventions such as survival swim lessons and water safety education.

### GHAI's role:

GHAI worked with the Department of Child Affairs and the local Department of Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs to increase awareness and public demand for lifesaving interventions and build political commitment and ownership. As a result of the collaboration, between 2019 and 2021 the province trained 105 local instructors, who in turn trained 4,500 children on survival swimming and 7,500 children on water safety.

### Results:

In 2021, Dong Thap People's Committee formally approved US\$500,000 over five years to support child drowning prevention—five times more funding than the national program had provided to the province. These funds will be used to reduce the child drowning rate by 10% by providing survival swim training for at least 100,000 children.

## Global Health Advocacy Incubator

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The **Global Health Advocacy Incubator** uses the power of advocacy to tackle critical public health challenges across the globe – including food and nutrition policy, injury and overdose prevention, and building resilient and equitable health systems. We are an initiative of the **Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids**, which is the leading advocacy organization working to reduce tobacco use and its deadly consequences in the United States and around the world.

**Our vision is a healthier and more equitable future for all.**