



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.

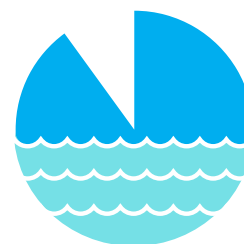
Activities

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.

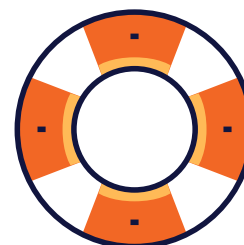
Focus Areas:

**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 15 (Vietnam)** and **under 5 (Bangladesh)**. In Uganda, drowning rates are highest among young adult males.



Program Profile

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, flotation devices and adoption of survival swimming skills to prevent drowning among high risk groups, including fisherfolk on Lake Victoria.
- In **Vietnam**, GHAI partnered with the Government of Vietnam, the World Health Organization (WHO), CSOs and local experts to design, implement and sustain a national survival swimming program. After eight years, the Government of Vietnam took official ownership of the child drowning prevention program—a major milestone and a clear signal of long-term sustainability. The program has reduced child drowning deaths by 16% in intervention areas since 2018.

Success Story

The challenge:

Vietnam faces a critical public health challenge: according to WHO, it ranks 6th in the Western Pacific Region for drowning deaths, with the highest burden tragically falling on children under 16 years olds.

GHAI's role:

Global Health Advocacy Incubator (GHAI) partnered with the Government of Vietnam to implement a WHO-recommended survival swim and water safety program that fundamentally transformed national child safety and reduced overall child drowning.

Results:

Implemented across 17 of Vietnam's highest-burden provinces, the initiative trained over 400,000 children—75,000 through GHAI funding and 334,000 through local government co-funding, demonstrating strong national ownership. And over 52,000 children received training in water safety skills. This has directly resulted in hundreds of lives saved and thousands of families protected.

“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



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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.