

Global Strategy for Drowning Prevention

Turning the tide on a leading killer



Global Alliance for
Drowning Prevention

Global Strategy for Drowning Prevention: Turning the tide on a leading killer

Global Strategy for Drowning Prevention: Turning the tide on a leading killer The Global Alliance for Drowning Prevention (GADP) is a global network of UN organizations and non-state actors hosted by the World Health Organization with a vision to accelerate country-level action towards a world free from the burden of drowning.

The GADP mission is to support global collaboration and enhance multisectoral coordination for effective, sustainable and cross-cutting drowning-prevention efforts. GADP members currently are: World Health Organization (WHO), United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), International Maritime Organization (IMO), Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), Makerere University, Centre for Injury Prevention and Research, Bangladesh (CIPRB), The George Institute for Global Health, Bloomberg Philanthropies, The Panje Project, Environmental Management and Economic Development Organization (EMEDO), Royal National Lifeboat Institution (RNLI), and Royal Life Saving Society – Australia (RLSS-A).

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Global Alliance for
Drowning Prevention

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SECTION 01





Drowning claims the lives of more than 300 000 people a year and impacts the lives of millions more through non-fatal drowning incidents that can cause lifelong disability (1). One in four drowning deaths are among children under the age of five and almost half of drowning victims are under 29 (1), robbing families and economies of some of their most active members.

More than 90% of drowning deaths occur in low- and middle-income countries (2), with low-income countries bearing the greatest burden of all in terms of lives lost and economic pressures while having the least resources to reduce the risks.

Drowning risks differs across people, places and contexts, and depends on the interplay of three main things:

- ▶ what water hazards are present (e.g. rivers, beaches, floods, or man-made water features like swimming pools);
- ▶ the context in which people are exposed to these hazards (e.g. for work, leisure, daily living, or in disasters);
- ▶ and the specific vulnerabilities people may have (e.g. relating to age, health, income, education, where they live) (1).

Put simply, drowning risk is highest when people with multiple vulnerabilities spend more time exposed to water. Children, people with disabilities, people living in low-income or rural settings, and those working on or near water face the greatest dangers, especially where swimming skills, safety measures or supervision are weak (2). Risk also rises in disaster-prone regions; in the context of risky behaviour (like swimming alone or using alcohol around water); or where people lack swim skills and/or safety knowledge (2).

Drowning is also a development issue, making drowning prevention critical to achieving many Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) including those related to child survival, sustainability, economic growth and climate resilience (2).

Preventing drowning is possible through evidence-informed, cost-effective and scalable solutions, supported by strong policies and legislation. Interventions like promoting supervision and safe places for children; installing barriers that limit water exposure; and boosting swimming, water safety and self-rescue skills are all effective in preventing drowning, especially for children (3).

Other interventions such as training bystanders in safe rescue and resuscitation; ensuring the presence of lifeguards; and enforcing maritime, ferry, and boating-safety regulations have broad benefits for drowning prevention (3).

TEN FACTS ON DROWNING (1, 2, 4)

WHO's Global status report on drowning prevention 2024 surveyed countries on multiple aspects.

More than 300 000 people died in drowning incidents in 2021

Almost half of drowning deaths occur among people aged under 29 years

Drowning rates in low-income countries are **3 times higher** than in high-income countries

Male drowning rates are **twice** those of females

25% of all drowning fatalities are among children aged 1–4 years

More than **90%** of drowning occurs in low- and middle-income countries

Drowning is an **equity issue** – poorer communities often bear the greatest burden

The 4th biggest killer of children aged 1–4 years is drowning

Drowning is **preventable** – cost-effective, evidence-informed solutions exist

Drowning is a development issue – some countries lose **3% of their GDP** to the impact of drowning each year

► Residents of marshlands in Iraq travelling in mashoof boats.
© WHO / Karrar Nasser



MOMENTUM IS BUILDING

Awareness of the importance of drowning prevention has steadily built over the past two decades, helping to drive a global decline of 38% in the global drowning rate since 2000 (1). And since 2021, there has been a rapid escalation in high-level advocacy, creating a platform for increased coordination of drowning-prevention efforts (1). This activity has galvanized the development of the Global strategy, which is hoped will harness momentum, build on several milestone achievements and further reduce the impacts of drowning (5).



● Ferry on the river Mahananda, West Bengal, India. © WHO / Florian Lang

2014

WHO publishes the *Global report on drowning: preventing a leading killer (3)*, setting out the global drowning burden, closely followed by *Preventing drowning: an implementation guide (7)* in 2017, expanding recommendations for interventions.

2018

United Nations Group of Friends on Drowning Prevention is formed in New York, and in 2019 commits to pursuing UN resolution on drowning prevention. Member State briefing and drafting commences, is interrupted by COVID-19 in 2020, and recommences in 2021.

2021

The United Nations General Assembly adopts an historic resolution on global drowning prevention (8), recognizing the impact of drowning, calling for coordinated multisectoral action, and declaring 25 July as World Drowning Prevention Day.

2023

The 76th World health assembly adopts its first-ever resolution on drowning prevention (9), requesting WHO, governments and partners to accelerate action on drowning prevention. The Global Alliance for Drowning Prevention is established.

2024

The first WHO *Global status report on drowning prevention* is launched (2), presenting a global snapshot of the burden of drowning in all countries and suggestions for a shared way ahead.



INTRODUCTION

This first-ever Global Strategy for Drowning Prevention responds to an urgent need to unite a diverse multisectoral and multistakeholder audience through shared goals and a coordinated effort to address the drowning challenge in all its forms. It offers a global-to-local approach, with affected people and populations at the centre of all decisions.

Developed by the Global Alliance for Drowning Prevention, in consultation with the WHO and a diverse range of other groups, this Global strategy provides a framework to:

- ▶ strengthen coordination and alignment of key actors globally, regionally, nationally and locally;
- ▶ develop a shared purpose, common goals and a coordinated response among all stakeholders;
- ▶ design and deliver effective interventions that address priority risk factors for drowning;
- ▶ help countries identify a multisectoral range of partners for effective collaboration;
- ▶ promote efficient use of resources;
- ▶ promote standardized, evidence-informed approaches to reducing drowning deaths, and their scale-up, tailored to local needs.

Who the Global strategy is for

The Global strategy provides guidance and a structured approach for the following stakeholders:

- ▶ **Global-level actors**
United Nations (UN) agencies, multilateral agencies, international non-governmental organizations (NGOs), development partners including banks and donors.
- ▶ **Country-level actors**
National governments, ministries and departments, drowning-prevention coordinating mechanisms where they already exist, national NGOs.
- ▶ **Community-level actors**
Local authorities, cities and townships, local associations and groups, community members.
- ▶ **Groups**
Civil society organizations, academics, donors, private sector organizations.

Drowning-prevention stakeholder map



VISION

A world free from the burden of drowning

OBJECTIVE

To build and sustain country-level momentum to reduce drowning risk and build resilience with a focus on three key domains:

- ▶ **People**
Addressing vulnerabilities according to life stage and population
- ▶ **Places**
Addressing hazards around the home and immediate surroundings; natural water bodies; waterways used for transport and migration; disaster-prone areas
- ▶ **Contexts**
Addressing exposures linked to everyday activities, transport, recreation, work, floods, disasters

GOAL

Unite to reduce drowning by 35% by 2035

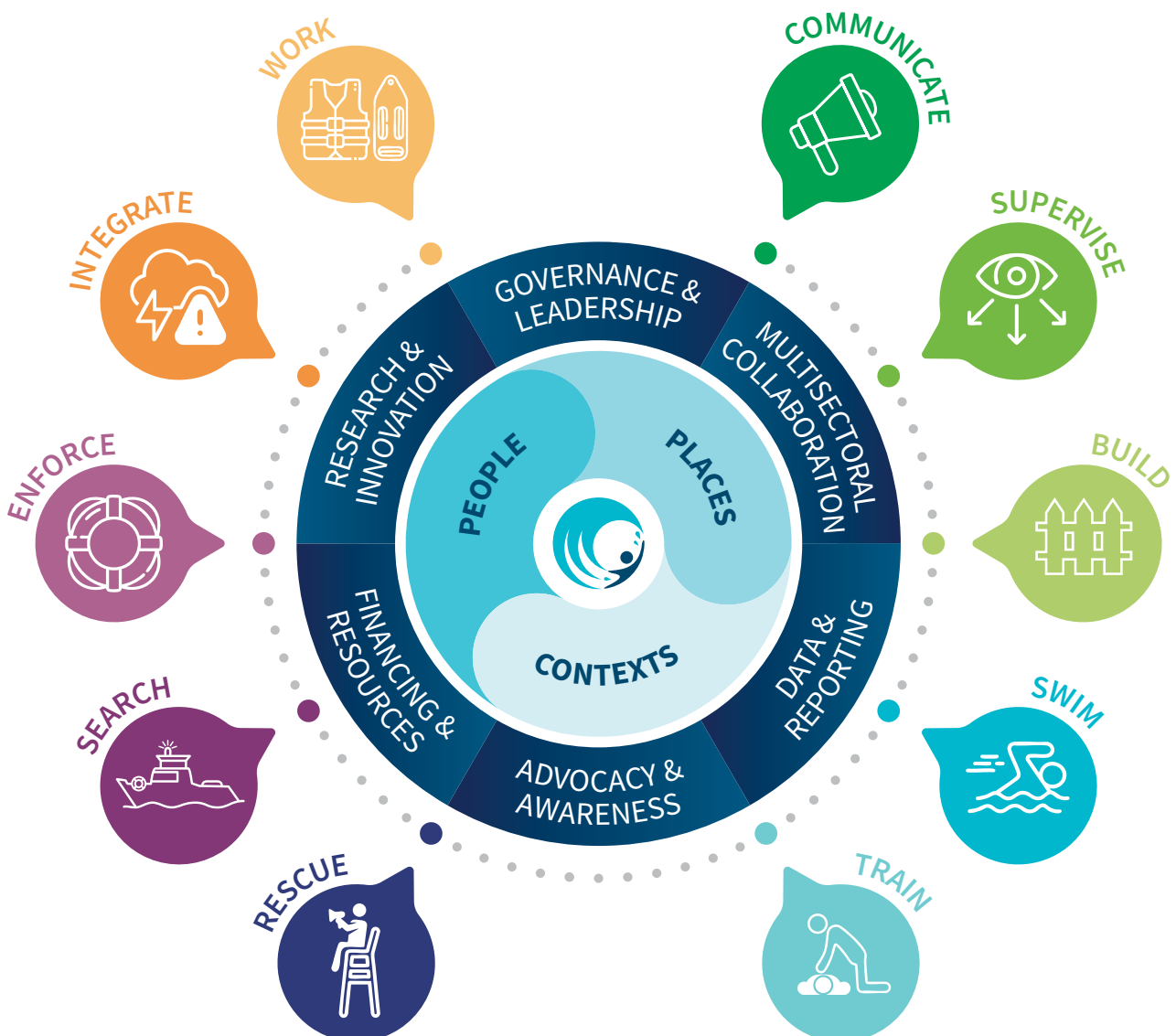
GUIDING PRINCIPLES

- ▶ Equity-driven
- ▶ People-centred
- ▶ Community-owned
- ▶ System-based
- ▶ Country-led
- ▶ Evidence-informed
- ▶ Data-driven
- ▶ Multisectoral and collaborative
- ▶ Accountable and trackable
- ▶ Sustainable and effective

THE GLOBAL STRATEGY FOR DROWNING PREVENTION

The Global strategy is supported by six strategic pillars and 10 priority interventions to guide a global-to-local, evidence-informed, collaborative approach to drowning prevention for the period 2025–2035.

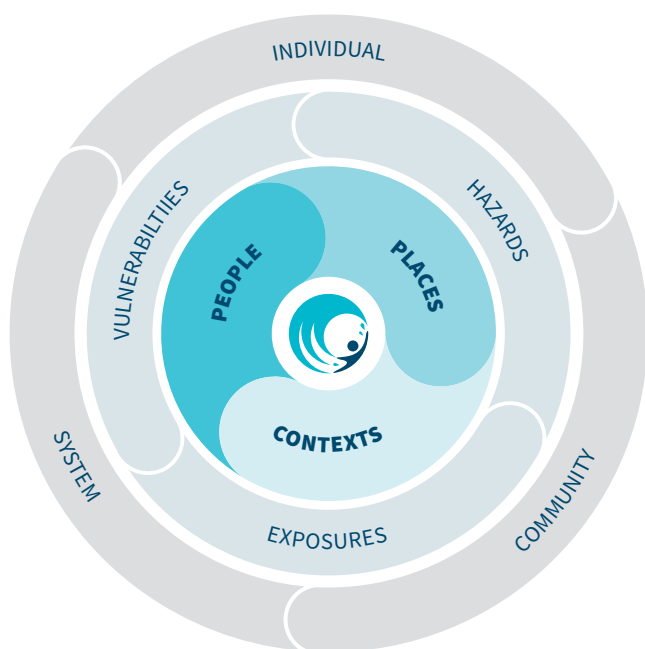
Its primary aim is to help countries effectively concentrate their efforts on a 35% reduction in drowning deaths by 2035, focusing on three broad and intersecting domains: people, places, and contexts.



THREE DOMAINS

The Global strategy's use of three broad and intersecting domains to address drowning prevention – people, places, contexts^a – enables it to systematically reduce drowning risk wherever and however exposure occurs, and build resilience across all settings, populations, and life stages.

REDUCING RISK AND
BUILDING RESILIENCE:



^a While the causes of drowning (e.g. poverty, poor safety measures, lack of awareness, flooding) and their remedies (e.g. education, infrastructural improvements, plans and policies) are common to each of these domains, these three broad categories can be useful in building a collaborative and unified approach to drowning prevention that can be tailored to national and local contexts.

PEOPLE

Within the **people** domain, the Global strategy's dual focus on **all age groups** (across life stages) and **all population groups** (including marginalized and high-risk groups) ensures drowning-prevention responses can be age-appropriate, equity-driven, and tailored to the different vulnerabilities of each group.

Age groups

Statistics show that children and young people bear the largest burden, with under-fives accounting for the largest single share (24%) of drowning deaths (1). A further 19% of deaths occur among **children aged 5–14 years**, and 14% among young people aged 15–29 years (1). Other age groups are also at elevated risk, including **older people** (particularly the over-70s), and gender also plays a part, with male drowning rates standing at least twice as high as those for females (2).

Population groups

Poor and marginalized communities are disproportionately affected by drowning. The vast majority of drowning deaths (92%) occur in low- and middle-income countries, where drowning death rates are more than triple those of high-income countries (2). And regardless of a country's economic development, drowning often affects the **poorest and least-educated people who live in rural settings**, especially where people have close daily contact with water for work, transport and agriculture (2).

Also at higher risk are **occupational groups** (e.g. fishers) who are exposed every day to water hazards; **people with disabilities** who have increased vulnerability because of mobility or sensory limitations; and **indigenous peoples** who may lack culturally appropriate education and community engagement (2).

Migrants and refuge-seekers resorting to hazardous channels for migration are also at high risk of drowning – not only because of overcrowded, unsafe vessels and treacherous water conditions, but also because when reaching their destination, they are unfamiliar with their new environment and may lack swimming and water safety skills (2).

PLACES

The Global strategy's **places** domain ensures that hazards are considered wherever drowning occurs, encouraging setting-specific, location-based interventions that protect those most at risk.

Homes and the built environment

These hazards are present around **homes and communities**, e.g. ponds, wells, ditches, water containers, or unfenced pools; and in **built environments** where there are swimming pools, canals, reservoirs, and stormwater drains (2).

Natural water bodies and processes

Hazards are also present in **natural water bodies** (rivers, lakes, ponds, beaches, oceans, and floodwaters); and in **physical processes** (e.g. waves, currents, water temperatures, and flooding (2)).

Travel on **waterways** or irregular migration across water expose people to drowning risks, as do **disaster-prone areas** in which people live, such as floodplains, coastal zones, and informal settlements near water (2).

CONTEXTS

The Global strategy's **contexts** domain addresses exposure to drowning – whether in everyday life, recreation, work, transport, or disaster situations (11).

Everyday life

Routine activities such as collecting water, bathing, washing, or crossing water bodies expose millions of people – especially in low- and middle-income countries – to drowning risk. Living near water in areas that lack barriers or signage around hazards, such as unsafe crossings, open wells, uncovered manholes, and ditches, poses additional danger (2).

Recreation

Aquatic sport and recreational activities can increase exposure to drowning. Swimming, snorkelling, diving, fishing from rocks, boating, and other leisure pursuits may result in drowning, particularly where safety skills, supervision, or effective rescue and lifeguarding services are lacking (2).

Work

Many occupations – including fishing, agriculture, and construction – require daily work in or near water, increasing drowning risk for adults and, in some cases, children. Fishers are among the most impacted groups, with at least 32 000 deaths annually and hundreds more injuries every year (9,12).

Transport

Water transport is frequently unsafe, with substandard vessels and poorly enforced regulations. Both large ferries and small boats serving communities pose significant drowning risk (10, 13).

Disaster

Disaster events – including floods, storms, and tsunamis – can dramatically increase the risk of drowning. Many homes are built in flood-prone areas, and coastal storms and inundation threaten those living and working near the sea. Tsunami events can pose significant risks of mass drowning to entire populations (2).

Effective implementation of the Global strategy depends on strong collaboration and coordination across government sectors. This approach leverages the expertise, resources and reach of each sector, ensuring that efforts are complementary, efficient and sustained.

Generating multisectoral approaches to drowning prevention can be challenging, especially where larger sectors need convincing that drowning affects them and that they can play a role in preventing it. The approach often involves equal parts of art and science, and the resourcing of coordination. Finding co-benefits in partnerships is critical. One approach is to ‘position, add, reach and reframe’ drowning prevention to reinforce shared action (12).

POSITION

Position drowning prevention as a priority within all relevant agendas, sectors, plans, policies and programmes, to maximize reach and impact. This includes aligning drowning-prevention efforts within broader strategies in health, education, disaster risk reduction, climate change, transport, work, health and safety, rural development, and child protection.

ADD

Drowning-prevention approaches can be added or integrated into existing plans, policies and programmes of different sectors. By working within established workforces, service delivery systems, training and certification programmes, data and surveillance systems, and monitoring frameworks, this approach increases the relevance and effectiveness of drowning-prevention efforts.

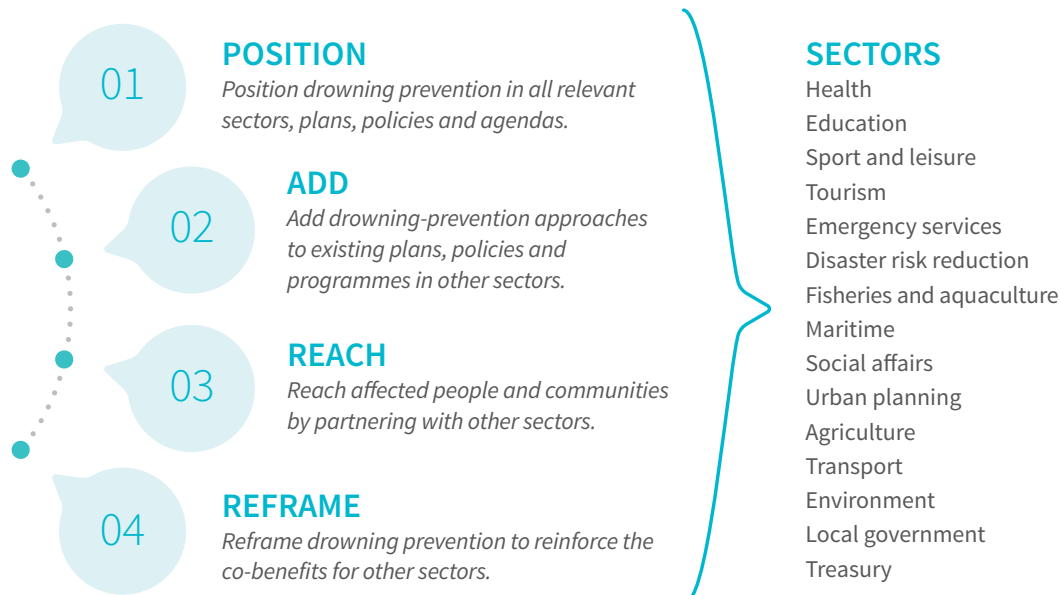
REACH

Different sectors engage affected communities in different ways, specific to their mandates, whether they be children, workers or disaster-exposed communities. Working across sectors also allows for interventions to be tailored to local priorities, embedded within ongoing community programmes and reinforced through multiple points of contact.

REFRAME

Drowning prevention contributes to multiple agendas – that are sector-specific (for example, occupational safety, transport safety, child health) and those that are cross-cutting (for example, resilience, development, economic productivity). Framing drowning prevention as a driver of these broader outcomes highlights its co-benefits and reinforces its value as a shared investment.

MULTISECTORAL APPROACHES TO DROWNING PREVENTION



Example multisectoral approaches using the strategic pillars and priority interventions recommended in this strategy

Sector	Example multisectoral approaches using the strategic pillars and priority interventions recommended in this strategy
Health	Add: Integrate drowning monitoring into injury surveillance (Data and Reporting); support training of health workers for cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) and water rescue (Train).
Education	Add: Embed swimming and water safety in school curricula, and promote school-based supervision (Swim, Supervise).
Sport and leisure	Position: Position drowning prevention within safe sport and aquatic facility management; require trained lifeguards at swimming venues (Rescue, Leadership and Governance).
Tourism	Add: Ensure tour operators implement water safety regulations, inform tourists of local hazards and employ lifeguards to reduce exposure where needed (Enforce, Communicate, Rescue).
Emergency services	Position: Include drowning prevention within the emergency services' approaches to search and rescue, resuscitation, and disaster response (Search, Train, Integrate).
Disaster risk reduction	Position: Include drowning prevention in climate and disaster agendas and integrate drowning interventions into national disaster risk reduction plans (Integrate).
Fisheries and aquaculture	Add: drowning prevention into existing work, health and safety legislation and programmes.
Maritime	Add: Require passenger and crew safety measures, licensing, and use of lifejackets on all marine vessels (Enforce, 'Leadership and Governance).
Social affairs	Reframe and reach: Address drowning among affected populations through social-protection and poverty-reduction schemes (Advocacy, Governance).
Urban planning	Add: Mandate barriers and safe infrastructure to protect children and the public near water bodies (Build).
Agriculture	Reach: Extend water safety training and risk assessments to reduce drowning in farming communities exposed to irrigation or natural water hazards (Work, Communicate).
Transport	Position: Apply transport regulations to water-based public transport safety (Enforce, Multisectoral collaboration).
Environment	Reframe: Promote safe interaction with water as part of environmental protection efforts; address risks in flood-affected areas (Integrate, Research).
Local government	Add: Resource and mobilize community-based drowning prevention (e.g. through daycare, barriers, local supervision, lifeguards) (Advocacy and Awareness, Build, Supervise, Rescue).
Treasury	Position: Embed drowning-prevention funding in cross-sectoral investment and national development budgets (Financing and Resources).

SECTION 02





SIX STRATEGIC PILLARS

The Global strategy is underpinned by six supporting, organizational pillars: governance and leadership; multisectoral collaboration; data collection and reporting; advocacy and awareness; financing and resources; and research and innovation.

This section outlines how these pillars can be strengthened globally, regionally, and at country and local level to reduce drowning deaths and injury.

GOVERNANCE AND LEADERSHIP

Enable shared leadership, accountability and partnerships to drive and scale-up effective drowning-prevention actions

MULTISECTORAL COLLABORATION

Align agendas and establish coordination mechanisms to unify and advance multisectoral drowning-prevention efforts

DATA AND REPORTING

Identify challenges, inform and build solutions, track and report drowning-prevention progress

ADVOCACY AND AWARENESS

Raise awareness and drive commitment to drowning prevention among stakeholders at every level

FINANCING AND RESOURCES

Ensure sustained funding for drowning prevention, including pooling resources across sectors with shared agendas

RESEARCH AND INNOVATION

Advance research capabilities and foster the creation of innovative, evidence-informed solutions for drowning prevention

WHO's *Global status report on drowning prevention 2024 (2)* surveyed countries on multiple aspects of drowning prevention, and revealed that:

53%

have a government-appointed national focal point for drowning prevention

less than 50%

have comprehensive national reporting, especially in low-income settings

31%

collect detailed data on activity at time of drowning and waterbody type

38%

engage with research organizations and academic institutions

26%

have a government-led strategy specific to drowning prevention

less than 50%

have a national drowning-prevention strategy

less than 40%

report having a national mechanism for multisectoral coordination on drowning prevention

65%

report collecting drowning data through civil registration and vital statistics systems (CRVS)

► Sandbags are piled up along the road to prevent flooding in South Tarawa, Kiribati. © WHO / Yoshi Shimizu



GOVERNANCE AND LEADERSHIP

WHAT TO DO?

Enable shared leadership, accountability and partnerships that can drive and scale-up effective drowning-prevention actions

WHY?

Effective governance^b for drowning prevention ensures interventions are better integrated into, and aligned with, cross-cutting agendas led by various sectors and organizations, thereby amplifying reach, sustainability, and impact. It also fosters shared ownership and accelerates scale-up of proven actions, making drowning prevention more effective. Leading action on drowning prevention requires global, national and local mechanisms and strategies.

ACTIONS

Global level

Increase global and regional governance and leadership:

- The Global Alliance for Drowning Prevention deepens and expands partnerships with UN agencies, and national and international NGOs to align and integrate drowning prevention with agendas such as child health and development, youth education, climate resilience, and occupational safety, among others.
- Drowning prevention is better understood across relevant international fora and within relevant international agendas.
- Networks of national focal points from government and civil society are supported to ensure high-burden countries receive technical and financial assistance for drowning-prevention policy development and implementation.

Country level

Establish national and subnational governance mechanisms and plans to drive drowning-prevention efforts:

- National drowning-prevention plans are drawn up and are evidence-informed, monitored and adjusted as necessary, and aligned to the Global strategy.
- National actors take a lead in setting up governance mechanisms, generating support, harmonizing resource allocation and incentivizing alignment and integration of drowning prevention into broader (related) cross-cutting agendas.
- Drowning prevention is embedded in national and subnational policies for a range of sectors and integrated into relevant frameworks (e.g. those for disaster risk reduction, maritime and fishery safety, child health and development, education and youth development, and climate adaptation).

Local level

Ensure local action aligns with national plans and engages with the full spectrum of local actors, including affected communities:

- Community leaders are supported and empowered to galvanize local drowning-prevention advocacy and action.
- Local communities are engaged, ensuring they have a sense of the main elements of national and subnational plans that impact them, and an opportunity to engage in local implementation and decision-making around drowning prevention.
- Local leaders and community groups coordinate and communicate with each other to maximize their drowning-prevention efforts, and are supported to ensure their actions are compatible with local governmental prevention strategies.

CASE STUDY:

Leadership to reduce drowning in Zanzibar, United Republic of Tanzania

Drowning is a persistent problem in Zanzibar, United Republic of Tanzania, and the country's Multisectoral Drowning Prevention National Action Plan 2024–2028 is the first coordinated national effort to address drowning incidents.

Spearheaded by The Panje Project, a local drowning-prevention organization, and supported by WHO and RNLI, initial efforts to galvanize the plan drew on public health networks and the disaster management and educational sectors for outreach and support, engaged extensively with communities, and produced educational materials.

The plan targets high drowning-risk groups such as fishers, seaweed farmers, tourists and children by prioritizing community-driven interventions including aquatic survival training, school water-safety education, and targeted awareness campaigns. It also aims to address broader systemic challenges, strengthen emergency response and data collection, while addressing economic and climate-related challenges that increase drowning risk. Through local leadership and international collaboration, Zanzibar seeks to reduce preventable deaths and empower communities, providing a model for similar settings worldwide.

- ▶ Water safety training provided to students in Fujoni Primary School, United Republic Tanzania. © Panje Project

OUTCOMES

- ▶ **Increased recognition of drowning as a preventable global killer, with attendant strengthening of global mechanisms and frameworks and an increased capacity to support countries.**
- ▶ **Countries have, or are on track to have, national and subnational drowning-prevention focal points, operational coordination mechanisms, and national water safety plans.**
- ▶ **Local-level implementation aligns with national and subnational plans and involves all relevant stakeholders, including affected communities themselves.**



b Governance is how decisions are made and carried out, and includes coordination, legislation, funding and resource allocation, awareness raising, monitoring and evaluation, research and development, and knowledge-sharing.

MULTISECTORAL COLLABORATION

WHAT TO DO?

Align agendas and establish coordination mechanisms to unify and advance multisectoral drowning-prevention efforts

WHY?

A wide range of sectors can contribute to drowning prevention, including health, education, transport, disaster management, occupational safety, and others. Coordinated action brings relevant partners together and ensures the issue is integrated within all sectors' agendas.

ACTIONS

Global level

Strengthen mechanisms bringing global partners together:

- The Global Alliance for Drowning Prevention is supported to increase alignment, share resources and coordinate action between UN agencies, governments, development banks, NGOs, and academia.
- Collaboration is strengthened across UN agencies and their Member States to address drowning-prevention priorities (e.g. between the International Maritime Organization (IMO) and transport ministries to strengthen ferry safety; or between UNICEF/UNESCO and education ministries to promote swim-skills curricula), fostering a range of sector-specific strategies and creating accountability for action.

Country level

Facilitate multisectoral collaboration nationally and subnationally to generate and sustain momentum for broad approaches to drowning prevention:

- Coordination mechanisms exist and are context-specific, unite government and non-government groups, and link sectors with direct and indirect influence over interventions that reduce drowning risk, and build resilience to water-related risks.
- Mechanisms facilitate periodic exchange (of knowledge and experience) and reporting across national partners working in sectors relevant to drowning prevention.
- Cross-sectoral interventions and collaborations are developed to strengthen progress, especially where single-sector approaches are challenged by reach, scale and impact.

Local level

Maximize and amplify the benefits of national policies and interventions to reduce drowning locally:

- Drowning-prevention awareness is raised as part of local infrastructure programmes – e.g. addressing equity of access to safe places to swim, and bridge/levee/water-course design that reduces exposure to drowning risk for children, communities in low-lying areas, and those working around water.
- Awareness is raised about the co-benefits of addressing drowning for socially and economically disadvantaged communities (e.g. rural, remote communities, first nations peoples, migrants and refugees).

CASE STUDY:

Viet Nam's multisectoral approach to drowning prevention saves lives

Viet Nam's Interministerial 10-Year Action Plan on Child Drowning Prevention has established a coordination mechanism and task force comprising 10 relevant ministries and NGOs to mobilize resources from local authorities, communities and the private sector to scale up child drowning-prevention efforts – especially in rural and flood-prone areas. For example, drowning prevention is now built into the school curriculum, reaching more than 63 000 children with survival swim training and certifying thousands of swim teachers to deliver school-based training. To date, this has enabled Viet Nam to significantly decrease its child drowning rates by an estimated 16% in high-burden areas since 2019.

Diverse partnerships and innovative finance build programme reach and sustainability. Continuous data collection and regular review cycles ensure policies adapt and progress is measured each year. With advocacy and policy instruments such as the national programme and guidelines, Viet Nam demonstrates effective, coordinated, and evidence-driven action – mirroring the global strategy's call for community engagement, consistent evaluation, and cross-sector leadership built on reliable monitoring.

- ▶ Parents watch survival swim training in Dak Lak, Viet Nam. © WHO / Ho Chi Cuong

OUTCOMES

- ▶ **The Global Alliance for Drowning Prevention has expanded the engagement of the UN and other organizations and national bodies, as well as affiliations across sectors, and stakeholders are collaborating to reduce drowning.**
- ▶ **Countries report increased coordination, engagement and impacts across sector and cross-sector policies and plans.**
- ▶ **Non-government stakeholders contribute at national and subnational level to drowning-prevention planning.**



WHAT TO DO?

Identify challenges, inform and build solutions, track and report drowning-prevention progress

WHY?

Robust data collection and reporting provides valuable information that helps effectively target prevention efforts towards people and populations with the greatest vulnerabilities, measure progress, and guide policy and resource allocation. Better data also raises awareness among decision-makers, supports international collaboration, and ensures that interventions are evidence-informed, making drowning-prevention strategies more effective and accountable.

ACTIONS

Global level

Improve global data availability and understanding of the drowning problem:

- Periodic global and regional status reports assessing drowning-prevention efforts are produced.
- Agreement is established across sectors on aspects such as minimum datasets for capturing information on drowning and best practices for data-collection.
- Awareness of the scale of the problem is raised by communicating the best drowning data available.

Country level

Establish and strengthen data collection and data-sharing systems, including linking relevant data from sectors and stakeholders:

- Existing data-collection systems are strengthened to gather appropriately detailed information on drowning events, such as place of drowning and activity at the time of drowning.
- Data-sharing agreements across sectors are established, and where possible, combined systems that link data from various sectors.
- Gaps and duplication in existing data-collection efforts are identified.
- National drowning reports are published that track progress, highlight key challenges, identify priorities and outline proposed solutions.

Local level

Support high-quality data collection by relevant stakeholders:

- Participation in local data collection to feed into national reports is encouraged, ensuring timely and high-quality data provision.
- Local data custodians are engaged and updated through periodic training and support.

CASE STUDY:

Strong data collection tracks and spotlights progress, Australia

Australia's National Drowning Report uses thorough data collection and transparent reporting to shape effective drowning prevention. Published since 1994, the report presents data from the National Fatal Drowning Database of Royal Life Saving Society – Australia (RLSSA), which combines data from coronial records, media, and organizational monitoring, tracking more than 250 variables per drowning incident for detailed analysis. The report informs the Australian Water Safety Strategy and the design of drowning-prevention interventions; highlights emerging risks; and measures programme success, helping policy-makers to improve legislation and target vulnerable groups. Annual releases of the report support awareness, research, and help benchmark progress.

Australia's model – grounded in data quality, case verification, and ongoing investment – aligns with the global strategy's data section, supporting surveillance, evaluation, and continuous improvement. The committed, multi-source approach has been credited with helping to measure a 24% reduction in national drowning rates since 2002, demonstrating how robust data systems are foundational for sustainable water safety.

► Riverside in regional Australia © RLSSA

OUTCOMES

- **WHO and other UN agencies produce periodic global and regional status reports.**
- **Countries capture as much detail as possible on drowning incidents through their CRVS systems, and have forged links between multiple data sources to better inform prevention nationally and subnationally.**
- **Leaders and community groups respond strategically to findings of national/ subnational drowning reports, adjusting local implementation accordingly.**



ADVOCACY AND AWARENESS

WHAT TO DO?

Raise awareness and drive commitment to drowning prevention among stakeholders at every level

WHY?

Advocacy can influence how governments, NGOs, educators, and the private sector collectively shape policy and mobilize resources, and can help drive effective, widely accepted interventions. Raising awareness and promoting action among all stakeholders is also essential to build understanding, encourage uptake of evidence-informed measures, drive coordinated drowning-prevention efforts, and align drowning prevention with global health and sustainable development goals.

ACTIONS

Global level

Engage in global advocacy to expand and sustain high-level support, and ensure alignment with key UN agendas:

- Global action is catalysed and commitments are secured to link drowning prevention to broader agendas by UN agencies and Member States at high-level meetings and events.
- World Drowning Prevention Day clearly shows the importance of global action, resourcing effective interventions, amplifying community-led solutions.
- Other sectoral days such as World Fisheries Day or World Education Day are used as platforms throughout the year to maintain momentum and highlight the multisectoral nature of drowning prevention.

Country level

Coordinate country-level advocacy to generate support and integrate drowning prevention into relevant national agendas:

- Government and non-government sectors are mobilized to advocate for political and policy action on drowning prevention, using reliable data and evidence of drowning-prevention co-benefits for multiple sectors.
- Mass-media awareness campaigns are periodically run to strategically promote new policies and enforce regulations.

Local level

Implement campaigns to raise awareness and change behaviours:

- Public awareness and behaviour-change initiatives are run to target specific risks, reduce exposure, and build individual and community resilience to prevent drowning in context-appropriate ways.
- Diverse approaches are used – traditional media, digital platforms, community events, schools, and engagement with community leaders – to reach all audiences and stakeholders, and evaluate campaign impact.
- Targeting awareness campaigns at context-relevant issues (e.g. use of alcohol around water) is considered, alongside sharing stories of those affected to communicate the impact of drowning on families.

CASE STUDY:

Advocacy and awareness campaigns reduce child drowning by a third, Thailand

Thailand's Ministry of Public Health launched the Merit Makers programme to prevent child drowning by mobilizing communities, policy-makers, and local leaders through advocacy and public engagement. Teams focus public attention on drowning as preventable, using media, school and community events, and local champions to frame drowning deaths as urgent but avoidable. This approach leverages media and storytelling to help shift public attitudes, encourage uptake of proven interventions like swimming lessons and CPR, and strengthen safe behaviours at high-risk water sites and child-development centres.

These context-driven campaigns build momentum, policy action, and sustained funding, supported by multi-sector backing and government engagement. Strategic communication, clear messaging, and local ownership contributed to a 33% drop in child deaths in six years. Merit Maker exemplifies global strategy principles, showing how inclusive advocacy and tailored outreach build lasting awareness and safety improvements.

OUTCOMES

- ▶ **World Drowning Prevention Day generates activities in all countries, amplifying drowning-prevention messaging and evidence-informed, community-led solutions.**
- ▶ **Countries run advocacy campaigns targeting policy-makers and promoting evidence-informed drowning-prevention measures.**
- ▶ **Countries and local groups report behaviour-change public awareness campaigns (e.g. on dangers of consuming alcohol around water, or risks of child drowning).**

- ▶ Children participate in classroom-based water safety education in Chiang Mai, Thailand. © WHO / Caroline Lukaszuk



FINANCING AND RESOURCES

WHAT TO DO?

Ensure sustained funding for drowning prevention, including resource pooling across aligned sectors

WHY?

Integrated, sustained and innovative resourcing enables countries to pool expertise, funding, and solutions across sectors including health, education, disaster management, and rural development, for greater impact. Linking drowning prevention to broader health and development agendas unlocks new funding and partnerships, making efforts more sustainable, adaptable, and effective at saving lives.

ACTIONS

Global level

Increase global-level funding and investment in drowning prevention:

- Drowning prevention is seen as a development and equity issue by linking it with high-priority investment agendas such as the sustainable development agenda, fishery and maritime sector safety, climate change and disaster risk reduction.
- Development banks and global donors fund drowning-prevention activities with a wide range of drowning-prevention partners.

Country level

Increase country-level funding and investment in drowning prevention:

- Country and subnational drowning-prevention plans, policies and initiatives are supported by budget allocations across multiple ministries and sectoral departments.
- Budgets are tracked and reports published to ensure accountability across all stakeholder groups.
- Integrated and innovative country-level approaches to financing drowning prevention are developed to:
 - stimulate upstream investment at all levels by highlighting the shared social, health and economic gains for a wide range of sectors;
 - highlight co-benefits for priority agendas such as climate change, child health, safe transport, and occupational safety;
 - help align investment for greater impact.

Local level

Increase local-level investment in drowning prevention:

- Local programmes and interventions are supported by civic leadership, donors, community members and the private sector.
- Case studies showcasing programme success and impacts are shared widely to generate further support.
- Local fundraising ensures community hazards are addressed, and that no-one misses out on access to drowning-resilience programmes.

CASE STUDY:

Aligning drowning prevention with early childhood development unlocks resources, Bangladesh

In Bangladesh, drowning is the leading cause of death among children aged 1 to 5 years, yet it remains a neglected public health issue. A strategic shift reframed drowning prevention as part of the broader early childhood development agenda, moving some responsibility from the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare to the Ministry of Women and Children Affairs. This repositioning galvanized political support and unlocked US \$32 million in government funding to scale-up proven interventions, partnering with NGOs across 16 districts. These included community-based childcare centres and survival swimming lessons.

By aligning drowning prevention within national development priorities, the initiative attracted cross-sectoral buy-in and leveraged ongoing programmes. This holistic approach not only broadened implementation capacity but also strengthened the investment case for further national scale-up. Bangladesh's experience demonstrates how integrating drowning prevention into wider strategies can gain political traction, mobilize resources, and generate sustainable impact.

- ▶ Community-based daycare centre in Bangladesh.
© RNLI / Syed Naem

OUTCOMES

- ▶ **Increased government, donor and private sector funds and resources allocated to drowning-prevention efforts.**
- ▶ **Country-level funds and resources are boosted as a result of drowning prevention being folded into shared agendas, raising the profile and scale of these efforts.**
- ▶ **Innovation in drowning prevention generates buy-in and commitment of all stakeholders to include drowning prevention when allocating investments, budgets and resources.**
- ▶ **Infrastructure planning and investments increasingly take account of drowning prevention by incorporating measures that reduce drowning risk.**



RESEARCH AND INNOVATION

WHAT TO DO?

Advance research capabilities and foster the creation of innovative, evidence-informed solutions for drowning prevention

WHY?

Building research capabilities is essential to develop new, evidence-informed measures and generate the data and understanding necessary to identify drowning risks, tailor interventions, and evaluate what works in different contexts. A strong research agenda helps build consensus, inspire action, and align drowning prevention with broader health and sustainable development agendas, making global efforts more effective and sustainable. And given the dynamic nature of drowning risks (closely linked with factors such as climate, the environment, and social, economic and political shifts) a strong research agenda can help monitor how changing context influences drowning and help identify and respond to emerging risks as they arise.

ACTIONS

Global level

Promote the generation, sharing and effective use of new knowledge relating to drowning prevention:

- The Global Alliance for Drowning Prevention works with academic networks to coordinate and develop a global drowning-prevention research agenda.
- Global stakeholders share advances in evidence to catalyse and inform investments, especially those targeting people and populations with complex vulnerabilities.
- World Drowning Prevention Day and other global mechanisms bring together people to share knowledge advances in fields that share agendas with drowning prevention.

Country level

Build national and subnational approaches to strengthening the evidence base, understanding country needs and implementation challenges, and share results through publications and relevant fora:

- Where relevant, academic partners are integrated into implementation of drowning-prevention programming.
- Research is funded to explore and share context-specific understanding of the drowning burden and generate evidence for improved design and implementation of interventions.

Local level

Invest in helping subnational stakeholders across sectors understand and make maximum use of existing data and evidence:

- New technologies, data systems and approaches are explored to help better understand and adapt to diverse local contexts.
- The capabilities of researchers, policy-makers and practitioners to communicate with data and evidence to generate change in awareness, behaviours and action to support drowning prevention at local level are strengthened.

CASE STUDY:

World Conference on Drowning Prevention propels research

The World Conference on Drowning Prevention (WCDP) is a key global platform for catalysing research, collaboration, and policy action on drowning prevention. It gathers hundreds of researchers, technical experts, and decision-makers, usually from over 50 countries, and showcases evidence-informed innovation, policy and practice from diverse contexts.

WCDP presentations and posters – over 450 in 2023 alone – cover everything from measuring the drowning burden to risk mapping, programme evaluation, and best practice for swimming education, rescue, and aquatic safety. Dedicated networking sessions connect researchers and policy-makers, sparking new partnerships, multisectoral projects, and the translation of science into policy and practice. Scholarship funds actively support participants from low- and middle-income countries, facilitating exchange and capacity-building across countries and regions.

Each conference sees the publication of a call to action, which usually defines collective research priorities and highlights agenda-setting themes such as equity, climate change, social justice, and implementation science. These outputs reinforce knowledge generation, dissemination, and the active involvement of stakeholders to accelerate progress.

▶ Panel discussion at WCDP 2023 © RLSSA

OUTCOMES

- ▶ **A global research agenda helps communicate and share evidence and advances on what works to prevent drowning, and provides an overall direction for deepening the evidence base for drowning prevention.**
- ▶ **Countries integrate research into their national plans on drowning prevention, and fund research to strengthen interventions.**
- ▶ **Local interventions are improved by stronger, more integrated use of existing data to improve awareness and generate behaviour change.**



SECTION 3

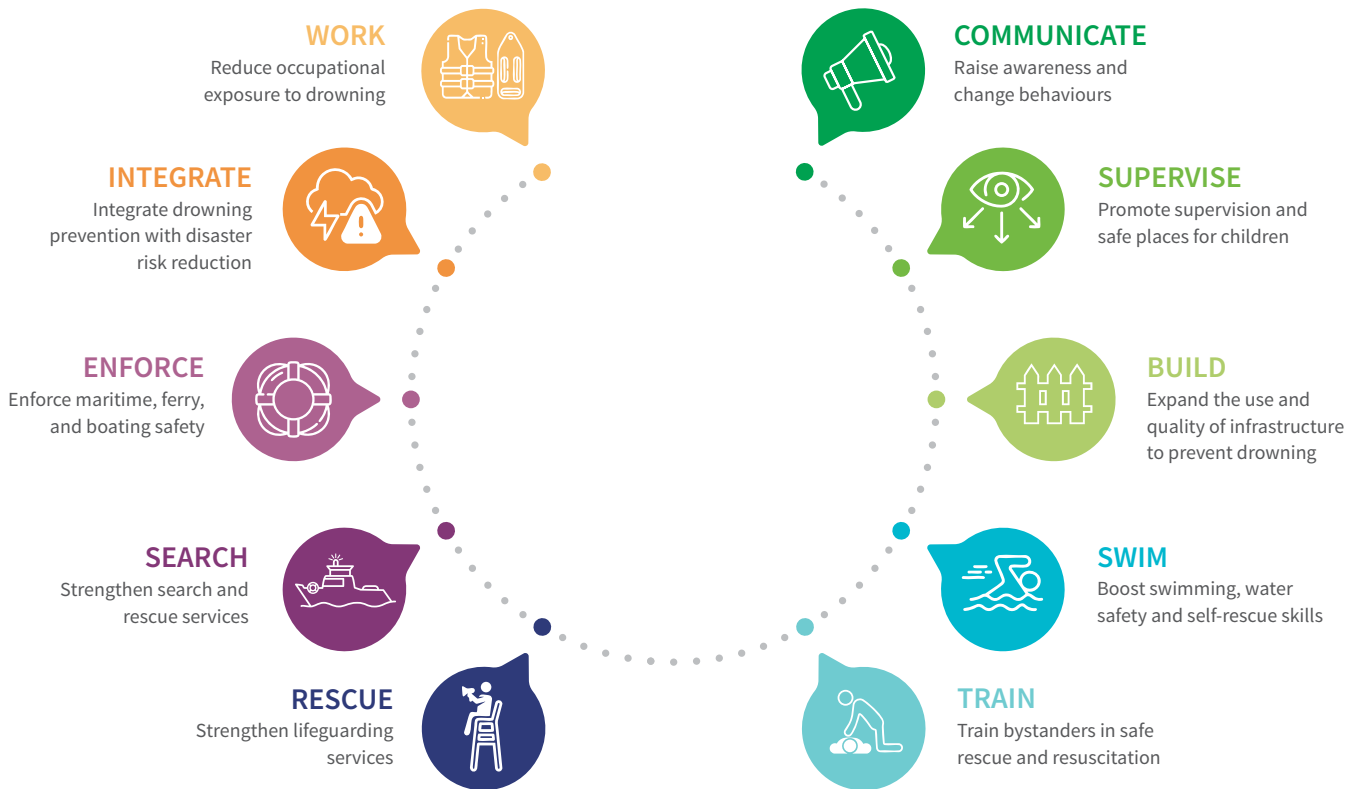




TEN PRIORITY INTERVENTIONS

The Global strategy aims to build resilience to drowning risk through 10 priority, high-impact, evidence-informed and sustainable interventions to prevent drowning.

While this set of recommended interventions may evolve over time (along with the Global strategy and the drowning burden itself), they all share key attributes that are essential to any drowning-prevention intervention: they are evidence-informed; scalable; address disparities and barriers to access; involve community engagement and co-design; and draw on innovation guided by science.



WHO's *Global status report on drowning prevention 2024 (2)* surveyed countries on the implementation of multiple drowning-prevention interventions, and revealed that:

20%

implement barriers near water at a national scale

33%

offer first-responder training for bystanders

38%

provide lifeguard services at the national level

22%

provide swimming and water safety training for children in school curricula or national programmes

46%

run national mass media campaigns focused on drowning prevention

28%

run national daycare services for pre-school children

42%

are building community disaster resilience

► Lifeguard at Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh.
© RNLI / Nihab Rahman





COMMUNICATE

WHAT TO DO?

Raise awareness and change behaviours

WHY?

Raising awareness about drowning prevention and implementing campaigns designed to change behaviour are essential because they build public understanding of drowning risks, promote proven safety measures, and drive uptake of interventions.

Strategic communications and education campaigns help shift attitudes and behaviours (such as improving child supervision, encouraging lifejacket use, and reducing risky practices around water), ensuring prevention efforts are effective and sustainable. These campaigns can also engage key stakeholders, support policy change, and create the foundation for scaling up successful interventions globally.

RESOURCES

World Drowning Prevention Day: a guide to taking part
<https://www.who.int/publications/m/item/world-drowning-prevention-day--a-guide-to-taking-part>

ACTIONS

- ▶ Global actors can promote World Drowning Prevention Day, and integrate drowning prevention into other UN world days to increase awareness.
- ▶ Countries can fund large-scale, comprehensive, evidence-informed awareness and behaviour-change campaigns on critical aspects of drowning prevention relevant to people, places and contexts.
- ▶ Communities can nominate local drowning-prevention champions and change-makers to target specific community-based drowning risks through direct advocacy, education and civic engagement.
- ▶ Individuals can mobilize to share awareness of drowning risks and prevention with family members, friends and neighbours.



SUPERVISE

WHAT TO DO?

Promote supervision and safe places for children

WHY?

Ensuring that young children are always watched by a capable adult when near water through providing secure environments such as community daycare centres or playpens where children are kept away from water hazards is a critical approach for drowning prevention.

Evidence shows that supervised childcare and safe play areas can dramatically reduce drowning risk for young children, especially in low- and middle-income countries.

RESOURCES

Preventing drowning: an implementation guide
<https://www.who.int/publications/item/preventing-drowning-an-implementation-guide>

Preventing drowning: practical guidance for the provision of day-care, basic swimming and water safety skills, and safe rescue and resuscitation training
<https://www.who.int/publications/item/9789240046726>

ACTIONS

- ▶ Global actors (e.g. those focused on early child development) can advocate for structured supervision of pre-school children by adapting existing programmes to include it.
- ▶ Countries can implement policies that promote access to childcare, especially in populations vulnerable to drowning, and implement large-scale campaigns promoting awareness of the importance of constant child supervision around water.
- ▶ Communities and local NGOs can provide access to quality supervised community daycare by providing drowning-prevention materials (including on the benefits of daycare) direct to parents.
- ▶ Individuals can closely keep watch of children around water and/or enrol their children in daycare or childcare.



BUILD

WHAT TO DO?

Expand the use and quality of infrastructure to ensure safe interactions with water bodies

WHY?

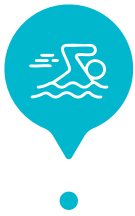
The design and placement of urban and rural infrastructure, including barriers, bridges, dams, swimming pools and housing, can prevent drowning and support safe interactions with water for people of all ages, in everyday life, in recreational and occupational contexts, and in disasters.

Physical barriers such as fencing (especially around pools), playpens, doorway gates, and covers for wells or cisterns have been proven to prevent children from accessing hazardous water sources near homes and communities. This approach is particularly effective for children under five years, who are most vulnerable to drowning, and is adaptable to most contexts.

The use of risk assessments and safety standards, especially when communities are actively involved, can influence the installation and enhance the effectiveness of infrastructure that prevents drowning.

ACTIONS

- ▶ Global stakeholders can ensure – where applicable – that drowning hazards, vulnerability, and exposure are considered in infrastructure development programmes.
- ▶ Countries can implement policies that scale up effective measures such as compulsory swimming pool fencing and infrastructure that supports safe access to water.
- ▶ Communities can conduct risk assessments to audit exposure to open water bodies (including on routes to school, in playgrounds, at leisure venues and during flooding), and act to create barriers and redesign environments to reduce drowning risk.
- ▶ Individuals can create secure child-safe environments away from water hazards by using barriers like pool fences, safe play areas, playpens, well covers and gates that block child access.



SWIM

WHAT TO DO?

Boost swimming, water safety and self-rescue skills

WHY?

Teaching basic swimming and self-rescue skills significantly reduces drowning risk, particularly in low- and middle-income countries where most drowning deaths occur and formal swimming instruction is scarce. Integrating these skills into school curricula and community programmes is a proven, scalable intervention that saves lives and supports broader health and social outcomes.

RESOURCES

Preventing drowning: practical guidance for the provision of day-care, basic swimming and water safety skills, and safe rescue and resuscitation training
<https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789240046726>

ACTIONS

- ▶ Global actors can strengthen global frameworks, curriculum and capacity building, and advocate for universal access to swimming, water safety and self-rescue skills training.
- ▶ Countries can establish policies and allocate resources for universal access to swimming, water safety and self-rescue skills, building swimming pools, training teachers and supporting inclusion in school curricula, ensuring national reach.
- ▶ Communities can set up and support local swimming and lifesaving programmes, and generate support to ensure no child misses out; raise the awareness of local people about the benefits of swim skills and water safety training for children; and encourage participation in accredited training programmes where available.
- ▶ Individuals, including parents, can seek local opportunities for swim-skills training (for themselves and/or any eligible children) and enrol in swimming programmes as trainee instructors or learners.



TRAIN

WHAT TO DO?

Train bystanders in safe rescue and resuscitation

WHY?

Training bystanders in safe rescue and resuscitation is essential because most drowning incidents are sudden and happen far from professional help, making immediate action by those nearby critical for survival.

Proper training helps bystanders to respond safely (reducing risk to themselves) and to perform effective rescues and resuscitation such as CPR, which can mean the difference between life and death. This approach is especially vital in low-resource settings, where emergency services may be limited, and ensures that communities are empowered to save lives when every second counts.

RESOURCES

Practical guidance for the provision of day-care, basic swimming and water safety skills, and safe rescue and resuscitation training
<https://www.who.int/publications/item/9789240046726>

ACTIONS

- ▶ Global actors can strengthen the knowledge-base, technical resources and advocate for drowning-prevention awareness in global CPR guidelines.
- ▶ Countries can develop policies that support CPR and safe-rescue education and training in settings including schools, youth groups, and workplaces.
- ▶ Communities can encourage local swimming clubs, youth organizations and community leaders to raise awareness of accredited training programmes; establish public rescue equipment stations; integrate CPR and safe rescue into community-based disaster responses; and boost safe-rescue training availability.
- ▶ Individuals can learn CPR and safe-rescue skills through accredited programmes, update their skills regularly and take preventative action to minimize the need to use such skills.



RESCUE

WHAT TO DO?

Strengthen lifeguarding systems

WHY?

Strengthening lifeguarding systems is essential because lifeguards significantly reduce the likelihood of fatal or non-fatal drowning by providing skilled supervision, proactive preventative actions, and rapid response in emergencies.

Lifeguards make recreational swimming areas safer for everyone because they are trained to identify hazards, oversee safety rules, and perform rescues and resuscitation.

Effective lifeguarding systems help raise public awareness about water safety and support broader prevention efforts, especially in recreational settings. Their presence is a scalable intervention that saves lives and supports comprehensive drowning-prevention strategies worldwide.

ACTIONS

- ▶ Global actors can strengthen the technical capacity of governments to develop and resource policies that support lifeguard systems, expand the evidence base for lifeguard-system effectiveness, and invest in implementation.
- ▶ Countries can establish policies that mandate lifeguard services at designated recreational swimming locations, integrate lifeguard services into emergency management systems, and position them as a core component in municipal and tourism services.
- ▶ Communities can raise the profile of lifeguard services, lobbying government for greater awareness and support, and running training and recruitment programmes to develop or strengthen local lifeguard services. Communities can advocate to ensure lifeguards are in places with high exposure and populations with known vulnerabilities, and have the resources they need to protect the public.
- ▶ Individuals can enroll, where appropriate, in lifeguard training programmes and join local group efforts to promote awareness of the need for lifeguard services. Individuals can boost their own and their children's swimming, water safety and lifesaving skills, always swim in locations with lifeguards, and always follow lifeguard advice and instructions.



SEARCH

WHAT TO DO?

Strengthen national and local maritime search and rescue services

WHY?

Maritime search and rescue (SAR) are coordinated activities to find and help people, vessels, or other crafts in distress or imminent danger at sea or in inland waters such as rivers and lakes. Maritime SAR encompasses two integrated elements: “search”, meaning organized operations coordinated by designated authorities to locate people in distress; and “rescue”, meaning efforts to safely retrieve individuals, address their initial medical or other needs, and deliver them to safety.

Effective SAR operations are critical to saving lives during maritime emergencies, disasters, and everyday water-related incidents, especially in areas with high exposure to marine and inland-waterway hazards. SAR systems improve the speed and reliability of emergency response, address critical gaps in search and rescue coverage, and support community resilience.

ACTIONS

- ▶ Global actors can strengthen maritime SAR protocols and capacity through collaboration with IMO and the International Maritime Rescue Federation (IMRF), and greater collaboration between countries; and ensure adherence to international best practices and legal frameworks.
- ▶ Countries can designate responsible authorities for maritime SAR, maintain and resource rescue coordination, develop operational protocols, and integrate SAR with national disaster management bodies.
- ▶ Communities can train volunteers and local responders in SAR procedures, communications, and first aid; and promote the inclusion of community-based rescue providers in national SAR exercises.
- ▶ Individuals can make themselves aware of how to alert SAR services, follow safety guidelines, participate in lifesaving training, learn to safely help others in distress, and support community resilience initiatives.



WHAT TO DO?

Enforce maritime, ferry, and boating regulations

WHY?

Enforcing maritime, ferry, and boating regulations is essential because water-transport incidents, especially on overcrowded, poorly maintained, or unregulated vessels are a major cause of mass-drowning events, particularly in low- and middle-income countries.

Effective regulations ensure vessels are seaworthy, not overloaded, equipped with lifejackets, and operated by trained personnel, while also restricting travel in hazardous weather. Enforcement of these safety standards significantly reduces the risk of fatal incidents for passengers and crew, making water travel safer and preventing large-scale loss of life.

ACTIONS

- ▶ Global actors can strengthen regulations and work to build enforcement capacity at regional and country levels.
- ▶ Countries can set and enforce maritime, ferry, and boating safety regulations and standards (including for transport and domestic passenger systems) and promote a culture of training and safety for crew.
- ▶ Communities can ensure national regulations for maritime safety, ferry traffic and boating are effectively delivered and enforced locally.
- ▶ Individuals can wear lifejackets, maintain their boats and watercraft, ensure they have the skills to use them, and take all safety precautions, including understanding weather forecasts.



INTEGRATE

WHAT TO DO?

Integrate drowning prevention with disaster risk reduction

WHY?

Integrating drowning prevention within disaster risk reduction efforts is essential because many drowning deaths occur during floods, storms, and other water-related disasters, especially in low- and middle-income countries.

By embedding drowning prevention in disaster risk reduction policies and planning, countries can address the root causes of exposure, such as unsafe housing near water, lack of early warning systems, and inadequate emergency response, thereby reducing vulnerabilities and exposures before disasters occur.

This integration also supports broader resilience and climate-adaptation goals, maximizes the impact of multisectoral action, and ensures that lifesaving interventions reach the people and populations most at risk of drowning.

ACTIONS

- ▶ Global actors can advocate for the integration of drowning prevention into disaster risk reduction policies and planning.
- ▶ Countries can integrate drowning prevention into disaster risk reduction systems at national and subnational levels.
- ▶ Communities can create disaster ‘safe places’ and evacuation centres, mitigate local hazards, and boost community resilience in readiness for disaster events.
- ▶ Individuals can make and implement a household emergency plan, and understand and follow instructions in times of flash flooding, inundation and storm surge.



WORK

WHAT TO DO?

Reduce occupational exposure to drowning for all who work in, on, or around water

WHY?

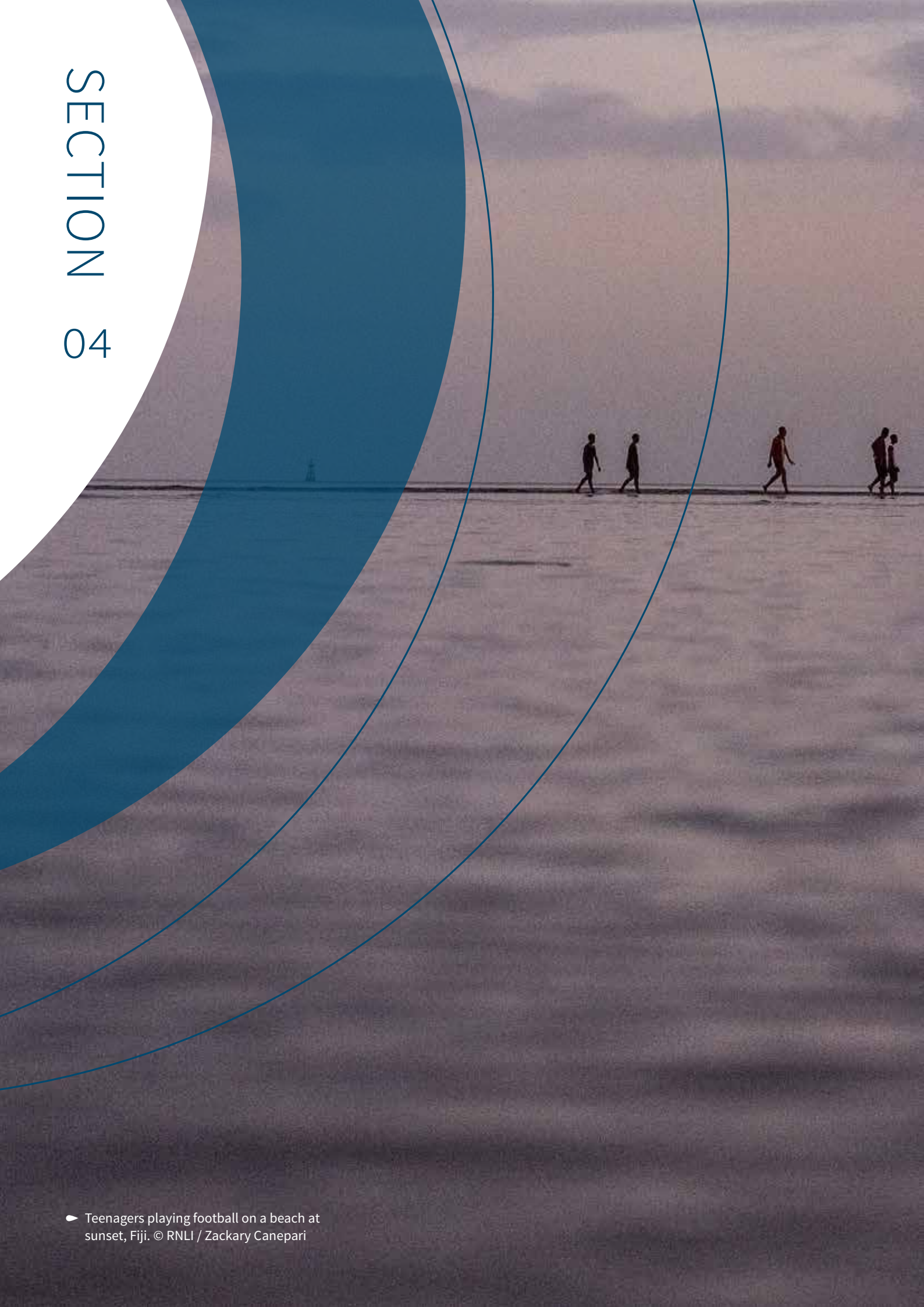
People working in or near water, especially in fisheries, aquaculture, agriculture, transport, and construction, face occupational exposure to (and higher rates of) drowning than the general population – particularly in informal sectors. Reducing this risk (which not only impacts individuals, but also families and communities) involves mandatory safety training, proper use of effective protective gear, routine risk assessments, develop of a strong safety culture, and raising awareness of drowning-prevention in wider communities.

Strong occupational drowning prevention activities can reduce fatalities and injuries, improve long-term productivity, supports economic sustainability, and lowers the human and financial costs of accidents and injury. Safety measures also help normalize protective practices as standard employment conditions and fulfil international labour commitments. In informal settings, such as SSF, community awareness, examples of simple actions which can keep people safe and monitoring by relevant organisations can also help support a reduction in incidents in these settings.

ACTIONS

- ▶ Global actors can promote adoption and implementation of international labour conventions and advocate for measures to achieve SDG 8.8, ensuring safe and secure working environments.
- ▶ Countries can develop legal frameworks for work-based water safety, implement licensing and inspection systems, establish national reporting for workplace drowning incidents, and integrate drowning-prevention into key sectoral policies, such as fisheries or employment.
- ▶ Communities and local NGOs can foster a safety culture through local initiatives, local workplace risk assessments, support worker-led safety programmes including supporting access to low cost, high quality safety interventions for all those who are at risk.
- ▶ Individuals can ensure personal compliance with work-based competencies, consistently use protective gear (including lifejackets), and follow established safe-work procedures.

SECTION 04





IMPLEMENTING THE STRATEGY

The global-to-local approach adopted by this Global strategy offers a flexible framework for implementation – from unifying stakeholders with shared interests, and choosing interventions, to strengthening research and innovation and monitoring and tracking progress.

FRAMEWORK FOR ACTION

1. Global-level advocacy, engagement and alignment

Global stakeholder engagement and alignment is possible across many areas of drowning prevention, including advocacy, data collection, evidence-building and research, and design and implementation at all levels. Within the UN, many agencies have the capability to integrate drowning prevention into their strategies and plans and thereby forge links with multiple health, equity, and sustainable development agendas.

The Global Alliance for Drowning Prevention can act as a platform to unite UN partners and NGOs working to address drowning at the global level. It will support collaboration and enhance multisectoral coordination for effective, sustainable, cross-cutting drowning prevention efforts to accelerate of country-level action to reduce the burden of drowning.

2. Country and local-level planning and interventions

At country level, drowning-prevention efforts begin with prioritization and planning. This involves situational assessments to establish national and subnational drowning profiles and the current drowning-prevention landscape and stakeholder analysis.

Technical guidance on the most appropriate, evidence-informed interventions for a given setting (be it national or subnational) as set out in the Global strategy and other WHO drowning-prevention guides can help stakeholders select context-appropriate remedies, accompanied by implementation guidance to generate multisectoral collaboration, public awareness, national plans and research.

3. Research, capacity building and monitoring progress

At global, country or local level, drowning prevention can be advanced through well-designed qualitative and quantitative research to better understand drowning patterns and the impacts of drowning-prevention approaches.

Implementation research enables the best possible programmes to be developed, modified and monitored, tailored to local contexts, and outcomes to be assessed. Research can also help with building human resource capacity for drowning prevention.

MAKING COMMITMENTS

Achieving sustained progress requires strengthened global and country-level commitments, and collective action across all relevant stakeholders. The following (illustrative) list suggests some key commitments that could be expected from different stakeholder groups.

UN system, multilaterals, and agencies can:

- ▶ Elevate the profile of drowning prevention and ensure coordinated action and resource allocation across the UN system.
- ▶ Establish shared platforms for accountability, collaboration, and continuous learning.
- ▶ Develop and promote guidelines informed by the latest evidence to address key drowning risks.
- ▶ Facilitate the exchange of knowledge and proven approaches among stakeholders.
- ▶ Monitor progress, identify shortcomings, and drive greater alignment and action.

Governments, ministries, policy-makers, and elected officials can:

- ▶ Acknowledge drowning prevention as a public health and development priority.
- ▶ Lead and support multisectoral, multistakeholder frameworks for effective collaboration.
- ▶ Develop, adopt, and operationalize comprehensive drowning-prevention strategies and plans.
- ▶ Integrate evidence-informed approaches into cross-sectoral policies.
- ▶ Allocate funding for priority actions, research, and systems that ensure accountability.
- ▶ Strengthen the skills and capacities of both government and civil society partners.

Communities and affected populations can:

- ▶ Advocate for action based on locally identified drowning vulnerabilities, hazards and exposures.
- ▶ Prioritize the specific needs of populations at greatest risk.
- ▶ Co-design and actively participate in developing tailored, context-specific solutions.
- ▶ Champion and lead implementation of interventions within communities.

NGOs and civil society organizations, businesses, academic and research institutions can:

- ▶ Promote greater attention, investment, and concerted action for drowning prevention.
- ▶ Enhance workforce skills and implement effective, evidence-informed initiatives.
- ▶ Create, communicate, and apply knowledge to inform and improve practice and policy.
- ▶ Build networks among practitioners, researchers, and advocates to foster coordinated progress and knowledge-sharing.

TRACKING PROGRESS

The Global strategy presents a cyclical approach to building and sustaining accountability, progress, and momentum for all stakeholders. This commit-monitor-review cycle drives progress, builds trust, and embeds a learning culture in the strategy's implementation.

Commit

Commitment is the act of pledging to accelerate effort, provide collaborative leadership, and prioritize drowning prevention within policies, plans, programmes and budgets.

All stakeholders – including governments, UN bodies, NGOs, businesses, and communities – should make specific, time-bound commitments, allocate resources, implement evidence-informed interventions, or support research and advocacy. These commitments can be at the global, national, or local levels and should be adopted with transparency, accompanied by clear targets or deliverables.

Monitor

The Global strategy aims to systematically track the progress and implementation of commitments. Monitoring should be regular (biannually), use comparable indicators, and be accessible to all partners.

Approaches to monitoring includes collecting, analysing, and openly sharing data on policies enacted, plans implemented, interventions delivered, resourcing and financing flows, and measurable outcomes, such as those listed throughout the Global strategy.

Review

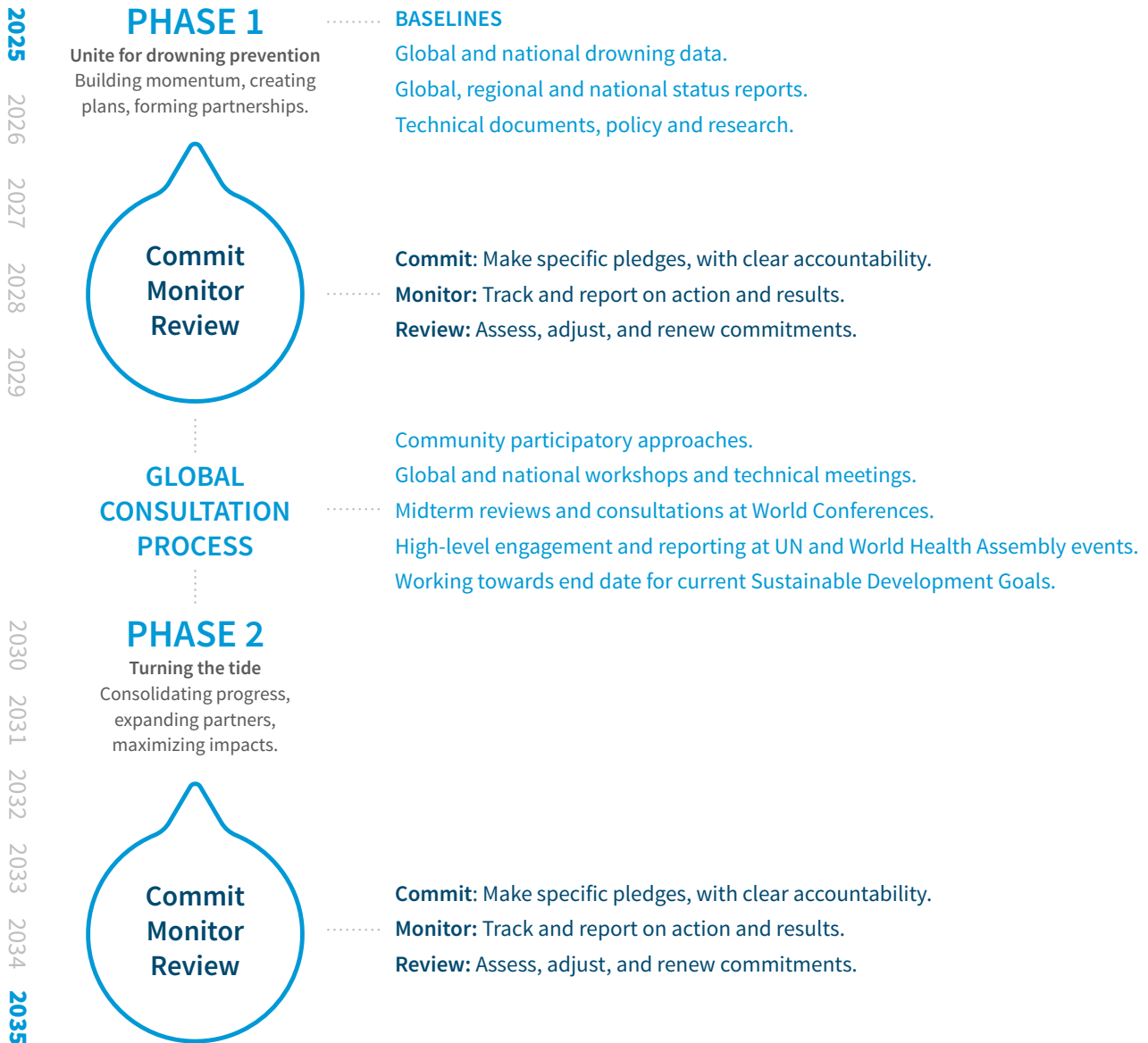
The review process means publicly evaluating progress against commitments and strategic goals and being prepared to adjust. This will be done through formal progress reports, country or global-level summits and workshops, peer reviews and independent panels.

Global strategy stakeholders will assess what has worked, what gaps remain, and how strategies should adapt. Review also involves celebrating successes, identifying persistent challenges, sharing innovations, and updating commitments for greater impact in a new cycle. The Global strategy aims to ensure transparency, maximize learning, and identify and support where action is lagging.

Clarification for the target

The Global Strategy target of a 35% reduction by 2035 refers to a reduction in the rate of global drowning deaths. Countries, communities, and other actors may choose to set targets, higher or lower, depending upon their focus on people, places and context.

TRACKING GLOBAL PROGRESS



OUTCOMES

- △ Increased resourcing and investment
- △ Increased integration in adjacent agendas
- △ Increased collaboration and collective impact
- ▽ Reductions in fatal and non-fatal drowning

TRACKING PROGRESS

Baselines upon which to measure progress will vary according to location and context. Progress to date provides many signposts, including:

Global and national drowning data

The Global strategy will take a pragmatic approach, using World Health Estimates 2021 to map global progress and guide action. Where available, country-level drowning reports – including data from CRVS, health facilities, police, maritime authorities, surveys, and research – will supplement and refine national baselines and monitoring.

Global, regional and national status

WHO's Global status report on drowning prevention will provide comprehensive national and global snapshots of progress, stimulate dialogue and country-level review, and serve as a foundation for tracking and coordinating action. Regional and national reports offer vital baseline data to drive collaboration and assess commitments, plans, and results over time.

Technical documents, policy and research

As the Global strategy aims to expand evidence-informed practice and knowledge generation, existing technical documents, policy, and research provide a snapshot of the current status of drowning prevention.

WHO has published technical guidance in key areas to support the strategic pillars and priority interventions of the Global strategy. The global drowning prevention community has also produced World Conference on Drowning Prevention declarations, detailed research, and technical reports – all of which provide benchmarks and tools for tracking progress into the future.

- ▶ Boat services (public transport) in Buka, Papua New Guinea.
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Global Indicators

This table provides indicators and outcomes for use in monitoring the Global strategy's progress. It is not exhaustive and more robust and detailed processes may evolve as the Global strategy itself matures and stakeholders unite for drowning prevention.

PILLAR	WHAT TO DO	INDICATORS	OUTCOMES
GOVERNANCE AND LEADERSHIP	Enable shared leadership, accountability, and partnerships.	Existence of national plan, coordination, mechanisms, and focal points.	Drowning prevention embedded in national policies; leadership structures operational; improved national response and accountability.
MULTISECTORAL COLLABORATION	Align agendas; establish coordination mechanisms to unify efforts.	Number of multisectoral committees, inclusive national plans, frequency of meetings, impact reports.	Increased coordination and collaboration across sectors; improved integration in development and disaster plans; shared resource mobilization.
DATA AND REPORTING	Identify challenges, inform solutions, track/report progress.	Status reporting, variables collected, data systems in use.	High-quality, timely data informs policy and program adaptation; regular national/global drowning reports; effective resource targeting.
ADVOCACY AND AWARENESS	Raise awareness and drive commitment at all levels.	Number of campaigns, population reached, World Drowning Prevention Day actions.	Widespread public and political awareness; behaviour change; increased political and funding support for evidence-informed prevention.
FINANCING AND RESOURCES	Ensure sustained funding; pool resources across sectors.	Budget allocations, cross-sectoral financing, number of externally funded programmes.	Increased allocation of government and partner resources; sustainable funding streams supporting interventions.
RESEARCH AND INNOVATION	Advance research and foster evidence-informed solutions.	Number of projects and publications, research engagement.	Policy and practice is informed by new and emerging evidence; innovation; and technological advances.

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