Drowning Prevention in Barisal

A Community-based Swimming Intervention

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Problem Statement

- Drowning is a significant yet neglected public health issue.
- It is the 3rd leading cause of unintentional injury mortality worldwide (WHO, 2014).
- In Bangladesh, 1900 people drown annually - 77% are children (Hossain et al., 2022).
- In Barisal, children aged 1–4 years face the highest drowning rate: 262.2 per 100,000 (Project Bhasa, 2021).
- Lack of swimming skills is a key contributor.

Objectives and Goals

Goal:

- Reduce drowning by teaching basic swimming to children (1–5 years) in Barisal.

Outcome:

- Children learned to float, swim freestyle, and gained water confidence.

Output:

- 100 out of 100 children learned to swim by end of intervention.

Activities and Inputs

Program Duration: Jan–Mar 2025 (3 months)
Location: Patuakhali Government College Pond
Structure:

- 2 classes/week + home practice
- Techniques: floating, breath control, freestyle

Inputs:

- Swimming gear, posters, visual aids
- Team of 4 instructors initially; later expanded to 7

Monitoring and Adjustments

- Continuous assessment on skill acquisition
- Identified children needing extra help
- Remedial sessions: 1-on-1 coaching
- Adjusted assumptions (e.g., pond availability, trainer hiring)
- Budget revised from 70,000 to 100,000 BDT (funded by parents)

- **Baseline:** None of the 100 children could float
- **Midline (1st month):** 12 passed assessment
- **Endline (3rd month):** All 100 could swim 100m
- **Impact:** 3.9% reduction in fatal drowning rate (from 262.2 to 252 per 100,000)
- Children may teach peers - promoting spillover effects

Conclusion and Future Implications

- Community-based swimming saved lives
- Scalable, low-cost model for other regions
- Importance of early swimming skill-building & parental involvement
- Future goal: Institutionalize swimming education in rural schools

Courtesy: Project Bhasa

Swimsafe lessons