

World
Drowning
Prevention
Day 25 July

Anyone can drown,
no one should.

World Drowning Prevention Day

A guide to taking part



World Health
Organization

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Introduction

Welcome to World Drowning Prevention Day, 25 July, which draws attention to the scale and preventability of drowning worldwide.

Backed by United Nations and World Health Assembly resolutions on drowning prevention (see Box 1), World Drowning Prevention Day offers a fantastic opportunity to catalyse concrete action and generate attention globally for drowning prevention and improved water safety.

This guide aims to inspire and support the planning of activities and events to mark World Drowning Prevention Day around the world. It provides details on how the day came about; key messages that participants can use; and offers ideas about the types of activities and events that can be developed by all sectors nationally and locally to make sure World Drowning Prevention Day is used to its full potential.

On each World Drowning Prevention Day to date WHO has published resources to help better address drowning (see timeline, page 6). Together, these resources and the awareness generated by World Drowning Prevention Day can help strengthen the world's response to drowning. We invite and encourage everyone to contribute to – and engage in – this global day of activity.

Box 1: UN and World Health Assembly Resolutions on drowning prevention

In April 2021 the United Nations General Assembly adopted a historic resolution on global drowning prevention, recognizing the scale and impact of drowning globally, and calling for coordinated multisectoral action to prevent drowning – a leading cause of injury-related death and disability worldwide.

The resolution invites all Member States and their partners to observe World Drowning Prevention Day annually on 25 July in accordance with national priorities, ‘...in order to raise awareness of the importance of drowning prevention and the need for urgent coordinated multisectoral action to improve water safety, with the aim of reducing preventable deaths’.

And in May 2023 the 76th World Health Assembly adopted its first-ever resolution on drowning prevention, requesting governments and their partners, in collaboration with the World Health Organization (WHO), to accelerate action on drowning prevention through 2029. The resolution was sponsored by the Governments of Bangladesh and Ireland and adopted by all 194 Member States to address this public health concern.



About this guide

This guide supports the planning and hosting of activities and events to mark World Drowning Prevention Day. Key audiences are governments, civil society organizations, academia and the private sector, and the international community. World Drowning Prevention Day is used to:

- draw attention to the global scale of drowning (see Box 2 for global statistics);
- draw attention to national or local drowning issues;
- start, or continue, conversations about drowning and its prevention at local, national, and global levels; and
- generate awareness and action on WHO-recommended, evidence-based measures to prevent drowning.

Box 2: Drowning – key facts

- Drowning has caused more than 2.5 million preventable deaths in the past decade.
- An estimated 235 600 people died from drowning in 2019.¹
- This equates to 650 deaths every day, 26 every hour – a silent epidemic of preventable deaths.
- Drowning is among the 10 leading causes of death for children and young people aged 1–24 years in every region of the world.
- More than 90% of drowning deaths occur in rivers, lakes, wells, domestic water storage vessels and swimming pools in low- and middle-income countries.
- Flood-related disasters increasingly affect millions of people globally due in part to the escalating adverse impacts of climate change, and drowning is the leading cause of deaths during floods.
- Over 60% of all drowning deaths are in the Western Pacific Region and the South-East Asia Region. Rates of drowning deaths per 100 000 population are highest in the Western Pacific Region, followed by the African Region.
- Drowning rates differ more than 68-fold between the countries with the lowest and highest drowning rates.

1 Global health estimates: leading causes of death. In: WHO/Global Health Observatory [online database]. Geneva: World Health Organization; 2024 (<https://www.who.int/data/gho/data/themes/mortality-and-global-health-estimates/ghe-leading-causes-of-death>, accessed 11 June 2024).

World Drowning Prevention Day: the story so far

2011

World Conference on Drowning in Viet Nam squarely identifies drowning as an urgent problem, particularly for low- and middle-income countries.

2014

WHO publishes the *Global report on drowning: preventing a leading killer*, setting out the global drowning burden and outlining key steps to reduce it.

2017

WHO publishes *Preventing drowning: an implementation guide*, providing practical steps to reduce drowning through the 10 evidence-based interventions and strategies set out in the *Global report on drowning*.

2021

In April, the United Nations General Assembly adopts an historic resolution on global drowning prevention, recognizing the scale and impact of drowning and calling for coordinated multisectoral action to prevent it. The resolution invites all Member States and their partners to observe World Drowning Prevention Day, July 25.

2021

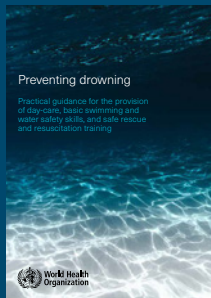
On July 25, the first-ever World Drowning Prevention Day is held. To mark the day, WHO publishes regional status reports on drowning for the South-East Asia Region and the Western Pacific Region. National progress on drowning prevention is reviewed in countries including the Australia, Canada, New Zealand, Thailand, and the United Kingdom.

Countries including India, Ireland, Kenya, and the United Republic of Tanzania embark on national dialogues on drowning prevention, engaging with government ministers, departments and MPs via letters, formal meetings, cross-sector roundtables, parliamentary petitions, debates, and child parliaments. The Food and Agriculture Organization launches its fisher safety dialogue.



2022

The second World Drowning Prevention Day takes place. Many countries take part across all WHO regions, under the theme “Anyone can drown. No one should”. The UN Group of Friends on Drowning Prevention marks the day at UN HQ in New York.



WHO's *Preventing drowning: practical guidance for the provision of day-care, basic swimming and water safety skills, and safe rescue and resuscitation training* is published to mark the day, providing concrete guidance for programme implementors delivering these three interventions in community settings to ensure their safe and effective implementation. In April, the International Maritime Organization adopts its domestic ferry model regulations.

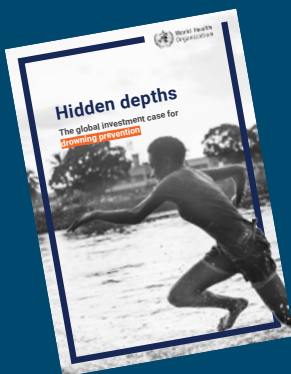


Under the banner “Going blue for World Drowning Prevention Day”, partners including surf rescuers, emergency responders, coast guards, fire and rescue departments, and swimming clubs raise awareness of the day around the world by floodlighting landmark buildings – and painting their faces – in blue.

2023

In May, the 76th World Health Assembly adopts its first-ever resolution on drowning prevention, requesting governments and their partners, in collaboration with WHO, to accelerate action on drowning prevention through 2029. The Resolution is sponsored by the governments of Bangladesh and Ireland.

In July, the third World Drowning Prevention Day is held, with countries in every WHO region taking part. To mark the day, WHO publishes a ground-breaking report, *Hidden depths: the global investment case for drowning prevention*, outlining the human, social and economic benefits of scaling up drowning prevention measures.



Planning World Drowning Prevention Day activities

Select from our global key messages

Convincing stakeholders that drowning is a large problem for which solutions already exist can be strengthened if everyone promoting drowning prevention shares a common set of key messages. These messages are:



Anyone can drown,
no one should.

“Anyone can drown, no one should” (the recommended slogan for World Drowning Prevention Day).

Water is an integral part of our lives. It gives us life, but it can also take it away. While no one is immune, the stark differences between drowning rates in the highest risk countries and lowest risk countries show that drowning is not inevitable. Currently over 90% of global drowning occurs in low- and middle-income countries. And in high-income countries, drowning rates among certain age groups and among minority ethnic groups are also very high and need attention. Inform those you engage with during World Drowning Prevention Day – whatever the nature of drowning in your setting – that anyone can drown, and no one should.

Every drowning is preventable. Solutions exist.

WHO has set out six evidence-based solutions to prevent drowning, along with detailed implementation guidance on how to implement them. While implementation will vary by context, it is important that the global drowning prevention community is consistent and coherent in articulating these interventions:

1. Teaching basic swimming, water safety and safe rescue skills to school-age children.
 2. Providing safe places away from water for pre-school children, with capable childcare.
 3. Installing barriers controlling access to water.
 4. Training bystanders in safe rescue and resuscitation.
 5. Setting and enforcing safe boating, shipping and ferry regulations, including the wearing of personal flotation devices.
 6. Building resilience and managing flood risks and other hazards.
-



We can all act to end drowning. Wherever we are.

There are many ways to act: raising awareness of the scale of the problem; recognizing and promoting knowledge and awareness that tested solutions exist to prevent drowning; working with local or national government to develop drowning prevention plans and policies; volunteering with a drowning prevention, lifesaving or search and rescue organization; knowing how to keep ourselves and our families safe in, around, or on the water. As World Drowning Prevention Day participants will have different priorities based on their contexts and setting, not all these global messages will be relevant for all activities, but they can be adapted.

Individuals can:

share drowning prevention and water safety advice with their families, friends and colleagues; sign up for swimming or water safety lessons; or support local drowning prevention charities and groups.

Groups can:

host public events to share water safety information; launch water safety campaigns; or commit to developing or delivering new drowning prevention programmes, using recommended best practice interventions.

Governments can:

develop or announce new drowning prevention policies, strategies, legislation or investment; convene multisectoral roundtables or parliamentary discussions.



Communicating your data

Most World Drowning Prevention Day activities focus on influencing local stakeholders, so adapting the global messages to your local setting is a powerful strategy. Use the national drowning statistics available from relevant government agencies (e.g. health or statistics bureaus); webpages of national water safety councils; and peer reviewed literature on drowning, etc. (see Box 3 for an example of tailoring these statistics to a national context).

Box 3: Using national statistics (where available)

Water Safety Ireland

- From 2017 to 2021 there was an average of 118 drownings in Ireland every year.
- Males represented 70% of drowning deaths.
- The majority of drownings (51%) were among individuals aged between 40 and 64 years.
- More than half (57%) of these fatal drownings occurred among people who, immediately prior to entering the water, were walking, hiking, foraging, fishing from land, cycling or driving.
- 23% of these fatal drownings were immediately preceded by swimming, bathing, or other water-based activities (excluding the use of any watercraft).
- 38% of all drowning deaths occurred due to suicide.

For more information visit <https://watersafety.ie/statistics/>



Photo: Water Safety Ireland

Drowning statistics can also be used to develop a compelling narrative to share with media. Using the latest statistics to show the scale of the problem – and how it affects real people where possible – can strengthen your call to action (See Box 4 for an example).

Box 4: Creating a narrative for media

Centre for Injury Prevention and Research, Bangladesh

Over 12,000 children aged 1–4 years die from drowning every year in Bangladesh – on average, some 32 children drown every day in the country. Notably, around 90% of these cases are not registered with police stations.

Dr Aminur Rahman, Deputy Executive Director of the Centre for Injury Prevention and Research Bangladesh (CIPRB), revealed these findings of a recent research at a press briefing. The research report said that around 80% of the children drowned in a pond or water body located within 20 metres of their home. Lack of supervision, exposure to



dangerous water bodies, lack of education and poverty are mostly to be blamed for these drownings, said Dr Rahman. Most drownings occur between 9am and 1pm, as this is the time when caregivers are busy with household work, he added.

“Drownings are on the rise due to heavy rainfall and floods in Bangladesh. The government has taken initiatives to prevent these incidents but the ministries of education, women and children affairs, and social welfare should be involved in these programmes.”

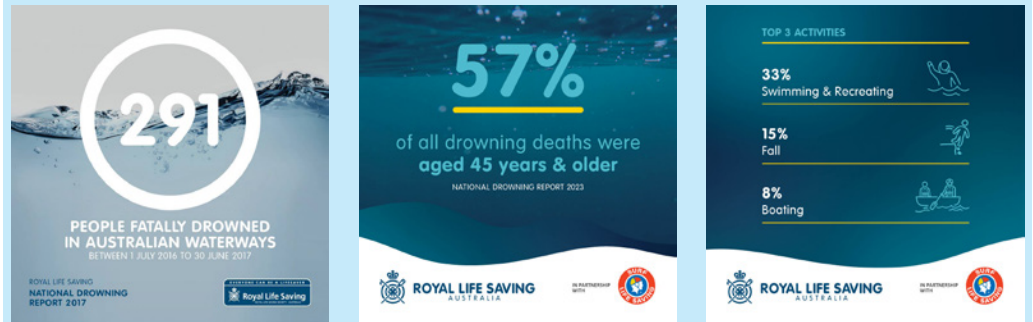
If your country does not have detailed national statistics on drowning, WHO’s [Global Health Estimates](https://www.who.int/data/gho/data/themes/mortality-and-global-health-estimates/ghe-leading-causes-of-death)² provide data on individual countries’ drowning burden that allow for comparison across countries. You can also consider providing statistics, images and key messages as social media or digital resources (see Box 5).

2 See <https://www.who.int/data/gho/data/themes/mortality-and-global-health-estimates/ghe-leading-causes-of-death>.

Box 5: Social media resources

Example: Royal Lifesaving Australia

Royal Lifesaving Australia produces a broad range of social media and digital resources with easy-to-use statistics on the country's drowning burden, including suggested text for websites and social media; digital displays featuring key drowning prevention activities; social media tiles with key statistics (see below); and downloadable posters (example resources and messaging [here](#)).



Decide your activities

Anyone and everyone can help support World Drowning Prevention Day. Whether you are a government policy-maker or teacher, a swim instructor or lifeguard, a first responder, a parent or a child – you can play a role.

Ideas for action

Activities and events to mark the day can be local, national or international. From seminars, webinars, campaign launches and press conferences to podcasts, reports and journal articles; and from adverts on football stadium screens and bus stops to speeches by world leaders and celebrities, and much more – these are just some of the ways that World Drowning Prevention Day happens around the world.

Action by governments and policy-makers

Discussion at high-level policy dialogues (virtual or in-person), roundtables, webinars or seminars to define or redefine a country's approach to drowning prevention (these can draw on the [UN resolution](#), [WHO Global Report on Drowning and Implementation Guide documents](#), and [Hidden depths: the global investment case for drowning prevention to guide discussion](#)).

For example, in Nepal, the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Authority (NDRRMA), which coordinates the country's disaster prevention and management, held a roundtable discussion bringing together ministries, police and nongovernmental organizations to raise awareness of drowning on World Drowning Prevention Day. The experts stressed the need for investment from federal to local levels to increase awareness and teach swimming and first-aid skills. At the roundtable, NDRRMA launched a report written jointly with Nepal Police revealing the latest national drowning statistics.

Enact or enforce new or existing drowning prevention / water-safety-relevant legislation or regulations.

Launch new strategies, plans of action or drowning prevention reports.

In Uganda, the Minister of State for Water used the day to highlight individual and collective responsibility to prevent drowning and to announce completion of the country's National Water Safety Strategic Plan for drowning prevention. "Through the implementation of this strategy, we aim to reduce the risk of drowning among the highest-risk population and communities, and to reduce the number of deaths from drowning in Uganda by at least 25% by the year 2028," said Hon. Aisha Sekindi.

Issue and/or revise relevant national drowning prevention planning guidance for local administrations.

Publish drowning prevention or water safety research.

For example, an article titled "[Rising tide: opportunities for accelerating action on drowning prevention](#)"³ was published in the Lancet to coincide with World Drowning Prevention Day 2023. The article raised the profile of both the Resolution and the myriad ways in which stakeholders are working to meet the challenges the resolution has set.

Public events

By water-safety bodies and emergency services

Campaigns to raise awareness of existing drowning prevention or water safety actions, and gaps in policy or legislation.

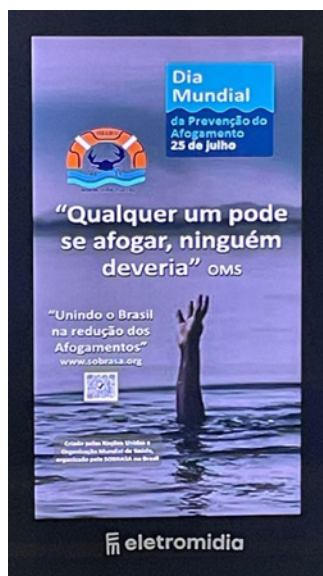


For example, in South Africa in 2022, the National Sea Rescue Institute released a video on the power of education to reduce drowning. In a country where only 15% of the population has learned to swim, the video described the NSRI's decades-long work to teach 3 million South Africans swimming and water safety skills, and highlighting that its 1335 "Buoys in pink" – placed at strategic drowning hotspots around the coast – are there to save lives.

3 See [https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736\(23\)01463-0/abstract](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736(23)01463-0/abstract).

Dissemination of campaign information materials.

From videos on floating device rescue in Greece, to poster campaigns in Ireland and Singapore, the message of World Drowning Prevention Day is being shared widely. In 2022, Costa Rica Ocean Rescue, in partnership with the International Life Saving Federation and WHO, issued a video addressing all aspects of drowning prevention, including advising against attempting to self-rescue a drowning victim but calling emergency services instead. In 2023, promotional material for World Drowning Prevention Day was seen at train stations in Brazil, across huge screens at football matches, and even in the sky.



By and for schools, local groups, and the general public

School-based initiatives, including the provision of water safety messaging appropriate to the local context.

For World Drowning Prevention Day in 2021, the George Institute for Global Health and the Child In Need Institute (CINI) organized a "child parliament" in West Bengal, led by children aged 8–16 years, to raise awareness of drowning prevention and chaired social debates to inspire action. This activity empowered children to draft a Child Declaration to reflect their hopes and dreams for a safe community and to end the drowning epidemic.



Public workshops and other education-oriented activities.

Swimming and water-safety skills are put in the spotlight every World Drowning Prevention Day. Lifesaving Association Uganda staged cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) demonstrations using mannequins and an awareness raising swimming gala, while Sobrasa in Brazil used superhero puppet workshops to teach children about water safety, giving out colourful leaflets, fun face masks and tabards for children taking part in the event.



Street parades, walks or related events.

From school processions in Thailand to a “traveling photo frame” in Galway, Ireland, World Drowning Prevention Day took to the road in 2023. In Galway, the photo frame visited numerous shops, cafes and pubs, getting local people to get the “Anyone can drown. No one should” message across.



Charity sports events or concerts.

In 2023 in Viet Nam, World Drowning Prevention Day was put centre stage in a family festival event in Hanoi, culminating in a song about being safe when swimming, written and performed by one of Viet Nam's high-profile singer-songwriters, Hoang Bach.



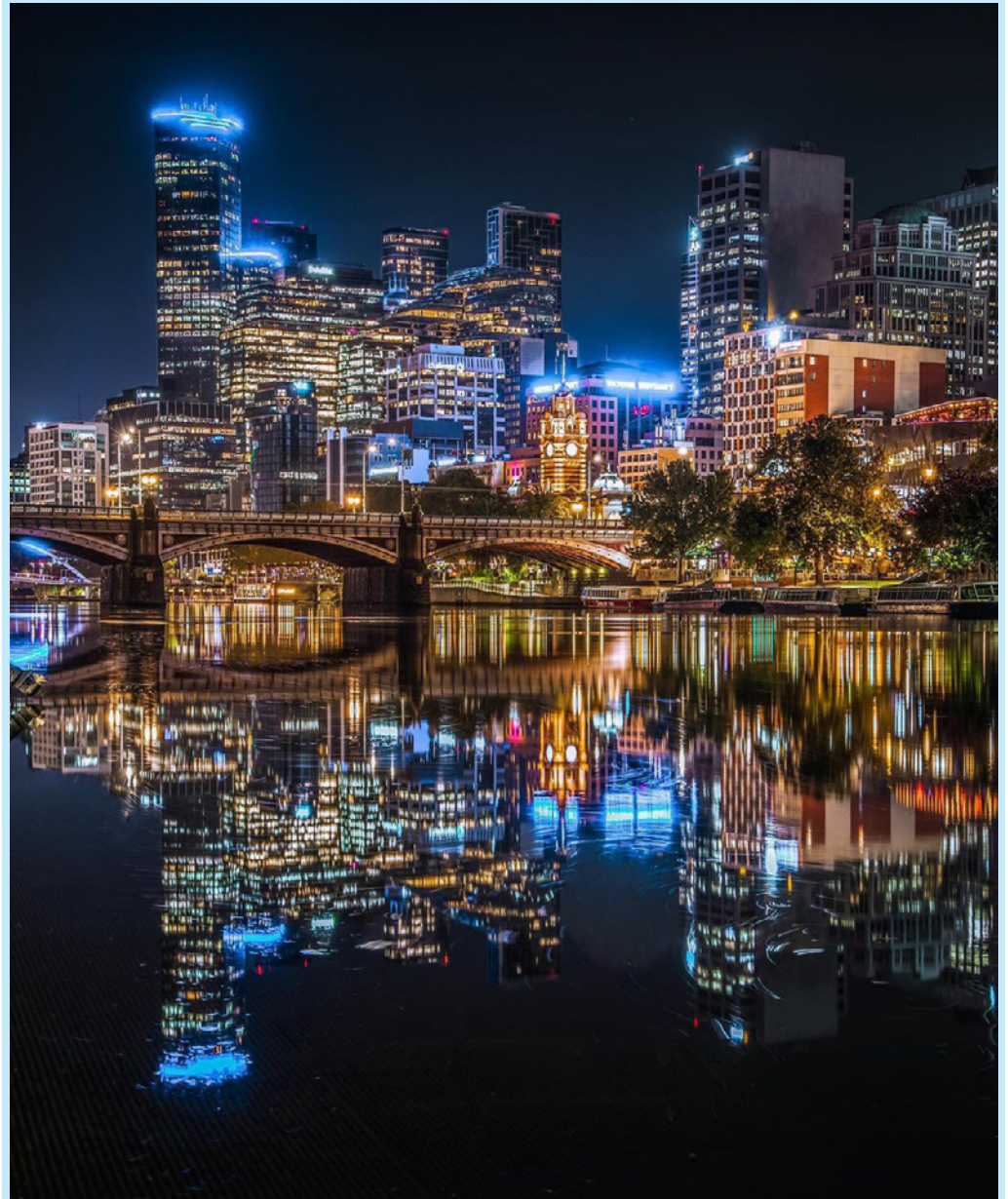
Remembrance ceremonies.

Remembering those missing or who have lost their lives through drowning is a powerful reminder of the need for drowning prevention. The Philippines Department of Health held a remembrance candle-lighting event.



Box 6: Going blue for World Drowning Prevention Day

The international theme “Going blue for World Drowning Prevention Day” has unified events worldwide since 2021. From Ireland to New Zealand, public buildings, national landmarks and tourist attractions big and small have been lit in blue light to spread the word – from the world-famous Christ the Redeemer statue in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, to the Jet d’Eau in Geneva, Switzerland, and the Melbourne skyline in Australia.



In the media

Press conferences and statements:

Government ministries can use the day to make awareness-raising statements and calls to action. In Ghana, the Director General of the National Disaster Management Organisation (NADMO) used the day to call for citizens to abide by safety measures to prevent drowning and for stronger national surveillance systems.⁴

4 See <https://gna.org.gh/2023/07/nadmo-observes-world-drowning-prevention-day/>.

Radio or television interviews or televised debates or talk shows.

Letters to the editor and opinion pieces in print media:

Leaders and drowning prevention experts can raise the profile of the day with commentary in print media. UN Ambassadors who led the process to secure the UN resolution that established World Drowning Prevention Day secured an opinion article in the Devex news platform, setting out the links between drowning and other development issues.⁵

Special newspaper articles:

Linking statistics and information on drowning prevention to human stories of drowning can be a powerful way to gain attention. In the United Arab Emirates, the dramatic story of the near-drowning of a 18-month old boy spread awareness of drowning prevention and the urgent need for water safety skills and awareness.⁶

Social media posts – including a countdown to the day, case studies, images and facts

By international organizations

Focus on a specific at-risk group:

Each year 32 000 commercial fishermen and women drown. Fishing safety activity for World Drowning Prevention Day has taken place in Uganda and Tanzania.⁷

Getting a “champion” for the cause:

Former cricket star and politician Shakib Al Hassan helped raise awareness about drowning prevention in his role as UNICEF Bangladesh National Ambassador. A video in which he gives practical advice to parents on how to keep children safe from drowning went viral, receiving 22 million views on social media.



5 See <https://www.devex.com/news/sponsored/opinion-turning-the-un-s-pledge-on-drowning-prevention-into-action-100440>.

6 See <https://gulfnews.com/uae/world-drowning-prevention-day-father-recalls-how-his-drowning-toddler-was-rescued-from-dubai-swimming-pool-1.97159669>.

7 See <https://www.fao.org/fishing-safety/news-events/news/detail/en/c/1417423/>.

Getting media coverage: a quick summary

Use the key global messages and WHO-recommended interventions to prevent drowning to help raise the profile of drowning prevention through local or national media, or through social media (see final section).

Make your communications relevant and local by using national or local data, where available. Use stories to show the human impact of drowning – sensitivity is required. So, consider the impact of sharing stories of loss on those affected.

Globally relevant social media resources are available from WHO on its [World Drowning Prevention Day website](#). This site is evolving and updated, so check frequently.

Social media handle: It is recommended that #DrowningPrevention is used as a common term for all social media posts.

World Health Organization: @WHO United Nations: @UN



Tools and resources

WHO social media resources: <https://who.canto.global/v/POE47HEIFK/album/TERRS?viewIndex=0>

UN Resolution on Global Drowning Prevention (A/RES/75/273)
[EN] <https://undocs.org/en/A/RES/75/273>

Also available via this link in French, Spanish, Arabic, Russian, Chinese

About World Drowning Prevention Day (UN Observance Calendar)
<https://www.un.org/en/observances/drrowning-prevention-day>

WHO World Drowning Prevention Day Information Page
<https://www.who.int/campaigns/world-drowning-prevention-day>

WHO Press Release UN Resolution on Global Drowning Prevention Adopted (28 April 2021)
<https://www.who.int/news/item/28-04-2021-governments-commit-to-accelerated-action-to-prevent-drowning>

WHO Global Report on Drowning (2014)
<https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/global-report-on-drowning-preventing-a-leading-killer>

WHO Technical Report: Preventing drowning: an implementation guide (2017)
<https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/preventing-drowning-an-implementation-guide>





Anyone can drown,
no one should.

Drowning is preventable, and is not something for which society should be prepared to adopt a fatalistic attitude. We know it is preventable using solutions that are effective, cost-effective, and scalable. Together, let's make every 25 July an international opportunity to create change locally, nationally, regionally and globally on this preventable cause of mortality.

Any one can drown, no one should.