

# Preventing drowning: an implementation guide



World Health  
Organization



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# Foreword



Margaret Chan,  
Director-General,  
World Health  
Organization

Far too many people around the world know the pain of losing a loved one to drowning. Each year almost 360 000 people die from drowning – over 90% of them in low- and middle-income countries. More than half of these deaths are among those younger than 25, with children aged under 5 facing the greatest risk. Drowning is the third leading cause of death worldwide for those aged from 5 to 14. Despite these tragic facts, drowning prevention gets relatively little attention and few resources.

There is far more we can do to prevent drowning. Global commitments made as part of the Sustainable Development Goals, for example, cannot be met as long as this preventable cause of death is left largely unchecked. All of us – policy-makers, parents, non-profit organizations, businesses and concerned citizens – can help prevent drowning. Explaining how is the goal of this guide.



Michael R Bloomberg,  
WHO Global  
Ambassador for  
Noncommunicable  
Diseases

Building on the World Health Organization's 2014 *Global report on drowning*, the following pages provide practical, step-by-step guidance on how to implement 10 effective measures to prevent drowning. They range from community-based solutions, such as day care for children and barriers controlling access to water, to effective national policies and legislation around water safety, including setting and enforcing boating, shipping and ferry regulations. Data show that all of these solutions can help save lives.

The more we work together to implement the measures outlined in this guide, the more lives can be saved. We urge all concerned to adopt as many of the interventions and strategies as their resources will allow, and to protect those most vulnerable without delay.





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