

Speech of Dr Shumona Shafinaz, Child Injury Specialist, UNICEF
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It's my pleasure to share the story of the child injury prevention project of Bangladesh, its inception, progress, successes and challenges.

Bangladesh is a small densely populated country in South East Asia; over 900 people live in 1 sq. km. Although per capita income is only 450 USD, the trends of development indicators over the last few decades are encouraging.

Let me start with a tragic incidence that occurred in 2006 in Raigonj, when the 2 brothers Hassan and Hossain drowned together while their parents had been working out. Though nobody saw them, people believed that 3 year old Hossain must have fallen into the pond and 10 year old Hassan then drowned trying to save his younger brother.

These 2 boys were not exceptional; they were only 2 of those 83 children who die due to injury every day in Bangladesh. This was revealed by the UNICEF supported Bangladesh Health and Injury Survey, the largest community based injury survey conducted in 2003.

30,000 children die, about a million suffer from moderate to severe injury and 13,000 become disabled due to injury in Bangladesh. Of the 30,000 annual injury deaths, 17,000 are due to drowning.

The findings of the survey were ground-breaking, acquiring mixed reactions from people. Some thought injuries were inevitable. While some others said 'injury prevention programme may be very expensive.

But the fundamental question was 'How could we prevent injury?'

There was an urgent call for action and government of Bangladesh and the DPs immediately responded by including injury prevention as a priority agenda in HNPS, PRSP and NPA for Children.

Moreover, an operations research project was initiated with the aim to develop an effective, sustainable intervention that would be suitable for developing countries. The project titled PRECISE stands for Prevention of Child Injuries through Social-intervention and Education. It is being implemented by the Centre for Injury Prevention and Research with technical and financial support from UNICEF and TASC.

PRECISE is being implemented in 3 rural areas and 1 urban area covering about 250,000 HHs and 2.1 million populations. 50% of them are children under 18 years.

The strategies of PRECISE are:

- **Improve supervision** of the young children
- Equip older children with the **life saving skills**
- Equip parents with **knowledge and skills** to identify risks and hazards and motivate them for prevention
- **Modify environmental** hazards through community participation

The packages of intervention are home safety, school safety and community safety. The results of all three packages are being measured by an injury surveillance system through which data are being collected from each HH on a monthly basis.

The purpose of home safety is to make the homes safer for children. The community based workers help the parents to identify risks through checklist and counsel parents accordingly.

The purpose of School Safety is safety promotion education through specific curricula and text books. Safe school environment is also being promoted through this initiative.

Community Safety:

The community people have been empowered to support and guide the project activities. Committees at village and union level meet on a regular basis.

One of the major community safety interventions is community crèche aimed at providing children a safe environment to play and learn. Two trained women supervise approximately 20-25 children for 4 hours a day. Total 6,700 children are being supervised in 203 crèches. Operational cost of a crèche is less than 3 US cent per child per day.

Water safety is another major community safety programme. Local youths are selected as Community Swimming Instructors (CSI) who are thereafter trained at Bangladesh Swimming Federation. Ponds are modified with low cost local materials. So far 19,000 children of 4-10 years have learnt to swim from 150 swimming centres. The cost of teaching one child is about 2.5 USD.

The communication activities include theatre and video shows at courtyards, social autopsy meetings, rallies, art and essay competitions etc.

Here are samples of few communication materials used by the project.

Home: The success stories: People of the project area are now aware. Many of them built mud barriers around cooking areas, put fences around houses or water bodies, keeps poisonous substances out of reach of children.

School: a school has put a fence around the playground to protect the children from drowning in the nearby river. All the resources required for this fence were borne by the students and teachers.

Community: No drowning among swim safe graduates while 109 children of same age group drowning among non-participants. No fatal or non-fatal injuries among crèche participants occurred while they were in the crèche. Statistically significant reductions of drowning found in all intervention areas. This is the last year of the research and we look forward at the results of the final evaluation that will guide us for future scaling up and integration of the project.

We feel encouraged with the story of Akash and Sagor who live in the same area Raigonj where PRECISE is being implemented.

Akash and Sagor, 2 brothers went to the nearby pond which was filled to the brim. 7 years old Akash was fishing while 5 years old Sagor was playing around. Suddenly Akash found his brother drowning in the water. Using the

technique learnt from the CIPRB Swimming Instructor, he laid down on the ground and threw his fishing pole at Sagor who caught hold of it. Hearing Akash screaming, their 45 year old grand mother rushed and pulled Sagor to safety.