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Background

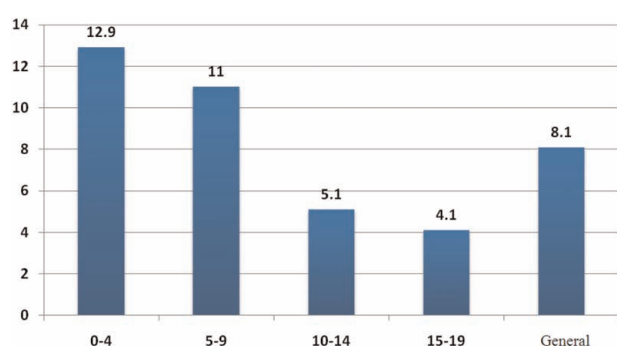
- Vietnam: Population (2009): 86 200 000 people. Vietnam has more than 2300 rivers with more than 5000 river vessels and ferries, but many of these facilities do not have enough life jackets or life-saving equipment.
- Many beaches and waterways have no protection. Many pit areas, whirlpools do not have warning signs.
- Vietnam is frequently flooded by monsoon storms and natural disasters, hundreds of people were drowned every year and in small part of them are children.

Drowning Situation of Children in Vietnam

- Drowning is the leading cause of death from injury. Drowning accounts for about 50% of deaths from injuries in children and adolescents aged 0–19. The rate of fatal drowning in boys doubled that found in girls. This is consistent with other global findings where male children are overrepresented in almost every part of the world, with drowning fatalities sometimes as twice as that of female children.
- The drowning rates in Viet Nam vary geographically, with the highest rates of non-fatal drowning observed in the Mekong River Delta in the Southern-most region of the country. The highest rates of fatal drowning, on the other hand, were observed in the Central Coast region populated heavily by fishermen. The lowest rates were reported in the North Central and Central Highland regions (Linnan *et al*, 2003; MOH, 2008). These patterns correlate with the abundance of bodies of open water in the regions.
- The highest rate of drowning fatalities in the 0–4 age group was 12.9/100 000, which almost doubled the figures of all

other age groups (VNIS, 2010). Another survey found a very high percentage of drowning deaths (72%) in the 5–14 age group, with almost half of the deaths occurred in the 5–9 age group (Linnan *et al*, 2003). This may be explained by the fact that in Viet Nam, most of the drowning cases happen outside the house in open bodies of water, where children in the 5–14 age group are more likely to play than their younger peers. The rates of non-fatal drowning in Viet Nam were highest in the 1–4 age groups (Linnan *et al*, 2003; VNIS, 2010).

- Only in 2008, 3523 children and adolescents aged 0–19 died from drowning, equal to more than 10 children each day, in which most cases occurred among children younger than 9 years of age. In 15 provinces with the highest number of deaths from drowning, an average of 106 children and adolescents aged 0–19 died in each province.
- Drowning—leading cause of death among children 0–19: > 3000 cases per year



• Child deaths due to drowning over the years 2005–2010:

Child mortality from 0–19 years old	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Total no. of child deaths from injury	6938	7198	7894	7020	7327	7460
No. of child deaths from drowning	3564	3662	3786	3523	3330	2411
Rate of child deaths from injury (1/100 000)	25.8	26.3	26.4	24.4	25.5	24.5
Rate of child deaths from drowning (1/100 000)	13.3	13.5	10.4	12.26	12.13	8.1

Source: MoLISA, VNIS 2010.

Risk Factors

- Child related factors: developmental and behavioural factors: Children in the 5–14 year age group, which in Viet Nam has the most occurrences of drowning, are at a level of independence where they move about and play outdoors, often unsupervised. Inability to swim is another important risk factor for drowning in children in Viet Nam.
- Environmental factors: Due to the long coastline of the country and the interlacing system of numerous rivers, streams and lakes, many houses in Viet Nam are built around rivers, lakes and ponds, or near the sea. These houses are, for the large part, unprotected by fences. Wells and water tanks used by families are also usually not covered. In Mekong delta areas, children have to travel across these waterways to get to schools, and using a ferry or boat to cross the waterway is a common means of transport. However, these boats are not equipped with life jackets or flotation devices. Viet Nam is exposed to frequent flooding and typhoons in the monsoon season. These natural disasters cause hundreds of people to drown every year, a significant proportion of these being children.

- Socioeconomic factors: Poverty is closely related to drowning hazard in the following situations: (i) Many families have both parents worked all day and nobody looks after children at home, (ii) Children must work to help their families, and child drowning is a high risk if near or in water bodies (rivers, sea, etc.), and/or (iii) children go to school through roads with ponds, lakes, rivers, and parents are too busy working and do not come pick them up.

Effective Approaches to Reduce Drowning Rates:

- *Eliminate the risk of drowning:
 - + Fence around water areas;
 - + Build borders around wells, water tanks, and
 - + Fill civil construction;
- *Train first aid skill for family members
- *Teach children to swim
- *Wear life jackets
- *Employ rescuers at the pools and beaches.

The Interventions done in Recent Years:

- *Use communication to raise awareness and teach drowning prevention skills.
- *Change/improve to make a safer environment for families, schools and communities.
- *Develop and implement regulations and policies on safety and drowning prevention.
- *Develop skills and teaching aid for children to learn swimming.

Continue Interventions:

- Need to further enforce laws and legal regulations for child drowning prevention
- Working out a feasible and practical strategy to provide swimming and water survival skills.
- Implement large scale child drowning prevention measures
- First aid education in the event of drowning needs to be focused
- Further research to evaluate the effectiveness of drowning prevention interventions.
- Eliminating hazards is still a challenge, especially for families living in houses that are built close to the water.