

13:00 BST (UK)

Mon 25 July 2022

**On World Drowning Prevention Day by  
the World Health Organisation (WHO)**

**'Do One Thing To Prevent Drowning'**

## **SPECIAL SESSION:**

### **The Future of Drowning Risk in the Context of COVID-19 and Climate Change**



#### **Special Session on World Drowning Prevention Day: The Future of Drowning Risk in the Context of COVID-19 and Climate Change**

Drowning deaths are avoidable deaths. And yet 'drowning is the third leading cause of unintentional injury death worldwide, accounting for 7% of all injury-related deaths' according to the WHO's Fact Sheet on Drowning. 'Drowning is the process of experiencing respiratory impairment from submersion/immersion in liquid; outcomes are classified as death, morbidity and no morbidity' (WHO, 2021). Although the global burden and death from drowning is experienced in all economies and regions, low-and middle-income countries account for over 90% of unintentional drowning deaths worldwide (WHO, 2021).

To highlight the tragic and profound impact of drowning on families and communities and offer life-saving solutions to prevent this type of avoidable death, in April 2021 the United Nations General Assembly declared 25 July as World Drowning Prevention Day (WDPD) (WHO, 2022). This is the second year that the Member States and stakeholders are celebrating WDPD on 25 July supported by the WHO.

The theme for WDPD 2022 is "*Do one thing to prevent drowning*". In the spirit of doing one thing to prevent drowning, the Avoidable Deaths Network (ADN) has decided to organise its debut Special Session on 'The Future of Drowning Risk' in the context of COVID-19 and climate change.

The ADN's Special Sessions were first launched on 4 December 2020 at the 'International Conference on Geographical Science for Resilient Communities' at Makerere University in Uganda. Since then, we have organised eight Special Sessions attended by more than 293 participants.

The Special Sessions are knowledge exchange and engagement webinars delivered virtually to the public for free with the aim to raise awareness on the concept of avoidable deaths and their avoidance through theoretical or practical solutions, or both. The Special Sessions also raise knowledge and awareness on those deaths that are often not in the

mainstream agenda of policy makers, practitioners, and even academia. Our previous Special Sessions have raised awareness on deaths from nutritional crises, dog bites, snakebites, and scavenging. In this vein, drowning deaths – an area of neglected public health - chime with the aims of ADN's Special Sessions. World-class researchers, experts and practitioners are invited to speak at the Special Sessions.

Moderated by the Royal National Lifeboat Institution, this Special Session panel will engage three world-renowned epidemiologists and injury prevention experts, Dr Olive C. Kobusingye from Makerere University, Dr Aminur Rahman from the Centre for Injury Prevention, Health Development and Research Bangladesh and Dr Colleen Saunders from the University of Cape Town, and tackle some of the difficult questions of the second half of the 21<sup>st</sup> century:

- What is the future of this neglected area of public health in the context of ongoing COVID-19?
- Can the agenda of reducing these preventable deaths be kept alive as the low-and middle-income countries grapple with the recovery efforts from the impact of COVID-19 and lockdown?
- What is the future of drowning risk in the context of climate change and increasing numbers of climate-related hazards?

The expert panel will bring context-specific challenges as well as solutions to keep this neglected area of public health at the centre of disaster risk, sustainable development and public health policy and discourse. The expert panel will also present their ground-breaking solutions that are destined to or are already defining the future of drowning prevention in their respective country through reduced deaths and improved governance measures.

Finally, the Special Session will be used to present the findings of the University of East Anglia's Water Security Research Centre and ADN's RNLI-funded research project on 'Climate Change and Drowning Risk in Bangladesh and Tanzania and the Implications for RNLI Programmes' and showcase some of the posters developed by the ADN's Junior Champions and Future Leaders.

### More Information:

For more information, please follow this website: <https://www.avoidable-deaths.net>

### References

WHO (2022) World Drowning Prevention Day. Available online: <https://www.who.int/campaigns/world-drowning-prevention-day/2022>

WHO (2021) Drowning: Key Facts. Available online: <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/drowning>

WHO (2021) First World #DrowningPrevention Day calls for accelerated action to prevent drowning, offers strategies to save lives. Available online: <https://www.who.int/news/item/23-07-2021-first-world-drowningprevention-day-calls-for-accelerated-action-to-prevent-drowning-offers-strategies-to-save-lives>

### Note

Description of the Special Session is written by Dr Nibedita S. Ray-Bennett. © Avoidable Deaths Network (2022)

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