**Development of the Philippines National Framework of Action on Drowning Prevention 2011–2015**

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**Introduction**

The World Health Organization Global Burden of Disease Report estimated that there were 388,000 who died as a result of drowning in 2004 and that 45% of them (approximately 175,000) were under the age of 20 years. Drowning is the third leading cause of unintentional death, it ranked 13th as the overall cause of death among children under 15 years old, with 1–4 year age group appearing at greatest risk. An overwhelming majority (98%) of these deaths occurred in low-income and middle-income countries. The same is true in similarly categorized countries in the Western Pacific Region which have the highest rates of drowning deaths (13.9 per 100,000 population). The Philippines portrays similar scenario vis-a-vis other Asian countries. The Philippines, as an archipelago of 7,107 islands which are not only surrounded by water but also has an intricate network of inland tributaries composed of rivers, lakes and ponds, provide vast opportunities to use those bodies of water for recreational and non-recreational activities. Moreover, the country is often visited by typhoons (average of 20–25 annually) causing floods, flooded areas, flash floods and turbulent seas which undeniably cost the lives of Filipinos. Thus the Philippines provides the following statistics: about eight persons die every day due to drowning (DOH Health Statistics, 2004) and that more were reported to be victims of near drowning (10 cases per day, 2008). Drowning is noted to be the second leading cause of death among children fourteen and below which accounted for 36% of reported 3,000 drowning cases among Filipinos who died annually. While the National Policy on Injury and Violence Prevention has already been formulated by the Department of Health, it has been recognized that much still needs to be done in the field of drowning prevention. Thus, a multi-sectoral conference on drowning prevention was organized to propel a concerted effort in addressing the problem. This provided the opportunity for the key stakeholders to develop the draft National Framework of Action on Drowning Prevention as the first major step in the fulfilment of its commitment to eliminate drowning as a crucial concern of the country.

**Objectives**

The main objective is to establish a strategic framework of action for drowning prevention which will provide guidance in planning and implementing programs, project and activities related to water safety and drowning prevention.

**Materials and Methods**

A number of records and reports were utilized as resource materials in the development of this document to ensure alignment of the framework to the current policies and plans relevant to drowning prevention. Technical working group (TWG) members met regularly to come up with the framework. The draft framework was presented in a national stakeholders meeting to elicit comments and suggestions before its finalization.

**Results and Discussion**

The National Framework of Action for Drowning Prevention 2011–2015 provides a broad foundation and specifies the general direction the country may take in preventing drowning.

There are five (5) strategic action areas identified to be the focus of initiatives which aim to fast track the decrease of mortality and morbidity associated with drowning. These five (5) strategic action areas as key priorities of interventions include:

- Policy, Standards, Regulation and Enforcement
- Program Management
- Service Delivery System
- Social Mobilization
- Research and Development

**Conclusion**

The development of the framework for drowning prevention is a major step undertaken by the Philippines Department of Health in response to the growing concern on drowning problem. With the strategies outlined in this policy directive, it is hoped that drowning incidents in the country will be lessened.

**References**


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