



# Lifeboats

**The Royal National Lifeboat Institution is looking for one Tanzanian journalist and one Tanzanian photographer to communicate personal stories of the impact of drowning on fishing communities on and around Lake Victoria, Tanzania. This work will be undertaken in early April 2022.**

Drowning is a silent epidemic that claims an estimated 235,000 lives every year, and Sub-Saharan Africa has some of the highest rates of fatal drowning in the world. Small-scale fishermen on the Tanzanian shores of Lake Victoria are particularly at risk from drowning. Yet, the realities and challenges faced by these fishermen and their communities are not well-known.

This project will amplify the voices and concerns of those most affected by drowning on Lake Victoria through carefully conducted interviews and professional photography.

## **About the Royal National Lifeboat Institution**

The [Royal National Lifeboat Institution](#) is a non-governmental organisation based in the UK and Ireland. The organisation's volunteer lifeboat crews and lifeguards have saved over 142,700 lives since 1824. Internationally, the Royal National Lifeboat Institution works to make drowning prevention a higher priority and supports partners around the world to develop solutions to save more lives. In 2021, the Royal National Lifeboat Institution helped to secure the landmark [UN Resolution on Global Drowning Prevention](#), and currently works with like-minded organisations in Bangladesh and Tanzania.

## **About the Environmental Management and Economic Development Organisation**

The Environmental Management and Economic Development Organisation (EMEDO) is a non-governmental organization based in Mwanza, Tanzania. The organisation works with and for fishers and fish workers to improve their livelihoods through capacity strengthening in areas of environment and natural resources governance as well as gender and women empowerment.

## **Background to the project**

The Royal National Lifeboat Institution is working with the Environmental Management and Economic Development Organisation to improve safety among small-scale fishing communities on Lake Victoria.

As part of this programme of work – which includes research and development of practical interventions to prevent drowning – the Royal National Lifeboat Institution wants to gather interviews and photographs which can be used across its communications channels to engage supporters based primarily in the UK and Ireland.

For examples of previous assets produced from interviews and photography conducted as part of the Royal National Lifeboat Institution's work in Bangladesh, please refer to the *Appendix* at the end of this document.

## **Journalist Profile**

- Experienced in telling human-interest stories in Tanzania, with an interest in social change
- Willing to travel to Mwanza to complete the work over a period of 4-6 days (including travel to several islands by boat)
- Able to conduct 5-6 sensitive interviews with members of fishing communities in Kiswahili (each interview will be up to 2 hours long)
- Able to provide full audio recordings and accompanying notes for each interview (there is no need to translate these into English as this will be completed separately)

## **Photographer Profile**

- Experienced shooting in Tanzania, with an interest in social change
- Able to produce c. 200 high resolution professional photographs which portray the personalities of the case study contributors and imagery of key themes such as:
  - (a) daily life by the lakeside
  - (b) detailed imagery of the different types of boats used by small-scale fishermen
  - (c) imagery of different types of boats working on the water

*\*Ability to shoot b-roll video footage of the above themes is a bonus*

## **Other considerations**

The case study contributors will be identified in advance of the trip by staff at the Environmental Management and Economic Development Organisation (EMEDO). You will be given preparatory reading based on a final content brief in advance of the trip and will be required to participate in a pre-trip briefing in Mwanza. EMEDO and an RNLI staff member will organise your travel and accommodation once in Mwanza and accompany you to visit specified communities on the trip itself.

This project will involve people sharing very personal, sensitive stories which often involve traumatic circumstances and difficult, strong emotions. Maintaining confidentiality is of the utmost importance in this project, and a process of informed consent will be facilitated by EMEDO. Successful candidates will need to be available for virtual conversations with the RNLI in advance of the trip.

*The trip will occur over a maximum of six days between Friday 1 – Saturday 9 April 2022. The exact dates will be confirmed in due course.*

## **How to register your interest**

If you are interested in completing this work, please share the following:

- examples of your prior work
- your indicative rates
- specifications for any technical equipment that you will use (audio recorders, cameras for photographs and video footage)
- your availability to complete the work

Please don't hesitate to get in contact with any further questions. Thank you in advance for your interest in this opportunity. Contact: [james\\_bonney@rnli.org.uk](mailto:james_bonney@rnli.org.uk)

## Appendix.

RNLI Web Articles: [‘Women in Bangladesh lead the fight against childhood drowning epidemic’](#), [‘2021: Highlights of the year from your RNLI family’](#)

Lifeboat Magazine Feature:

# Lifesaving in Bangladesh

Each year 320,000 people drown around the world. In Bangladesh it's an epidemic where 40 children lose their lives every day. The RNLI is uniquely placed to help and – working closely with local partners – the tide is beginning to turn

Nothing quite prepares you for the impact drowning has on people's lives in Bangladesh. You can study the statistics – more than 14,000 children drowning every year, most of them under 10 – and the figures are truly shocking. But it's not until you are sitting with grieving parents in their remote rural village and hearing dignified, yet harrowing accounts of how they lost their children, how quickly they were taken and how easily preventable the circumstances, that the true tragedy emerges.

The region of Barishal, deep in the Ganges Delta and bordered to the east by the Meghna River and to the south by the Bay of Bengal, is thought to be one of the worst places in the world for drownings of children aged 1 to 4. Eight children drown here every day. That's two classrooms of primary children losing their lives every week. In just one region of Bangladesh.

It's a situation Rima Akter, from a village in Barishal, knows only too well. She has twice had to rescue her son from a pond. Most drowning incidents happen within 100m of a child's home and that was so nearly the case with Tawhidul. Rima leads us just a few yards away from her home to the pond where her son, then 3½, was found unconscious after falling in.

The pond is about half the size of a tennis court. The water is muddy brown, the surface speckled with fallen leaves. The banks are steep and slippery and the water is screened by thick vegetation. At one point a small child wanders through the trees to our right and it's almost impossible to see him, before he is grabbed by a relative.

Rima Akter with her son Tawhidul

18 Lifeboatwinter 2020-21

Lifeboatwinter 2020-21 19

It's easy to see how Tawhidul could have fallen in and if he'd not been spotted, he'd have disappeared into the leafy murk. There are tens of thousands of ponds similar to this all across rural Bangladesh. Some smaller, some much larger. It's hard to comprehend the scale of this watery world. Almost every house has at least one pond, meaning villages are often surrounded by a patchwork of ponds, ditches and channels. Then there's the paddy fields, rivers, canals and lakes and then the monsoon season starts. In Barishal alone one person drowns every 2.5 hours.

But drowning is far from the only challenge the country faces. Diarrhoeal disease, malaria, dengue fever, cholera and now Covid-19 have claimed tens of thousands of lives. Add climate change into the mix and it's easy to see why the drowning epidemic has been overlooked. But things are changing and now Rima is part of the solution.

With the battle against infectious diseases in the country gradually being won, the issue of drowning has risen up the national agenda – thanks in no small part to the work of the Centre for Injury Prevention and Research, Bangladesh. Set up in 2005, CIPRB is dedicated to reducing the numbers of those injured in the country every year.

Led by Bangladeshi water safety experts and grounded in research, CIPRB has been pioneering home-grown solutions to issues such as drowning. CIPRB research discovered that children most at risk of drowning are aged between 1 and 4 and most die between 9am and 3pm. Why? Because that's when their fathers are away working and their mothers are busy with household chores. It only takes a few seconds for them to lose sight of a toddler and then it's only a matter of minutes before they'll be close to water – and danger.

One solution is creating a safe space for the children when the risk is at its highest – and the answer is a network of local creches, known as Anchals in Bangladesh. There are now more than 700 in Barishal, with funding and support provided by the RNLI Creches for Bangladesh Appeal and the Department for International Development.

That's where Rima fits in. She's an Anchal Maa. Every morning, in a small classroom in her village, she looks after and educates as many as 25 children. 'The Anchal is very important for this village,' Rima explains, with Tawhidul sat safely beside her. 'If it wasn't here the children would often drown and casualties would be much more. Mothers now feel confident the children are safe. The children are not only safe from injury, they also get to learn a lot more things.'

The Anchal programme also means women such as Rima are taught vital skills, not only in teaching water safety to the children and local villagers, but also in how to save lives, learning vital skills such as CPR. Rima resuscitated her son using her CPR training.

At one of the creches that has directly benefited from UK Aid Match funding, mothers Fatema Jannet and Nusrat Nipa (pictured right) are convinced their Anchal is a lifesaver. Like almost everyone in Bangladesh they know someone who has drowned – for Fatema it was a cousin's daughter, aged 2½, for Nusrat it was a child in her village.

'We used to hear that after every 2 or 4 months a child is drowned or has died, so we feel safe that such drowning or other injuries will not take place anymore,' explains Fatema, as her 4-year-old daughter, Muskan, sits inside the colourful nursery, reading out rhymes and singing songs. Next to her is Nusrat's 2-year-old, Nabila.

'As long as she is in the Anchal she is safe and protected and after 1pm all the household works are done, the child is safe with us so I'm not at all concerned,' Nusrat explains.

Now providing a safe space for more than 17,000 children each day, the Anchal programme is having an impact on tackling the drowning epidemic in Bangladesh.

The RNLI alone cannot solve the drowning crisis facing Bangladesh. But with almost 200 years of lifesaving experience, the charity is uniquely placed to share its expertise and work alongside organisations such as CIPRB in developing effective home-grown solutions, like Anchals.

The RNLI spends less than 2% of its budget on its international work but it remains a core part of what the charity does. In the past 2 years, funding has included donations from trusts, foundations and individuals as well as substantial contributions from the UK Department for International Development through the Creches for Bangladesh Aid Match Appeal and the Isle of Man's International Development Fund.

You can find more information and details about how you can help at [RNLI.org/international](#).

'MOTHERS NOW FEEL CONFIDENT THE CHILDREN ARE SAFE'

Words: Paul Dunt  
Photos: Syed Nisam

### An everyday story of children drowning in Bangladesh

Mohammed Badsha Boyati and his wife Khadiza Begum live on a peninsula of the vast delta, just a few miles from the coast. This is a landscape dissected by rivers and ponds. There is water everywhere. Barely 15m from the family's home is a tributary of the Payra River and it was here that their son, Robiul, lost his life at just 4 years old.

Mohammed starts to cry. Khadiza is inconsolable. Their grief is so raw it feels as if Robiul had only died just a few hours beforehand. Then Robiul's grandfather, Hashem Boyati wipes away his tears and begins to speak. They want to share their story he says.

On the morning Robiul drowned Mohammed had gone down to the river to fish. No one noticed his curious son had followed him there. By the time anyone realised Robiul was missing, it was too late. His body was found on the shoreline a short time later.

Mohammed and Hashem take us outside and show us a tree they have planted in Robiul's memory. As we are taking photos, Khadiza joins us. Lost in her sorrow, she has not said a word, but she is determined to be photographed in front of the tree with a photo of her son, the only two tangibles she has left from his short life.

### TACKLING DROWNING DURING THE PANDEMIC

Since the onset of the coronavirus pandemic the RNLI and its partners in Bangladesh have worked to ensure drowning prevention is not forgotten.

CIPRB has been forced to close its 700 Anchals, so the team in Bangladesh, local government and other stakeholders have developed key messages on coronavirus and reducing the risk of drowning.

The messages have been shared with communities – delivered through speakers from rickshaws, via community radio, mobile PA announcements, TV and SMS. Where it is safe, the messages are also being shared in person by the project staff to parents, community members and leaders. Meanwhile the RNLI is working with its partners to look at ways for the creches and Swim Safe to re-open.

18 Lifeboatwinter 2020-21

Lifeboatwinter 2020-21 21