



Drowning Prevention Program: Impact Report



"វៀនហែល ដើម្បីរស់"

(Learn to Swim to Live)

In just 5 years...

10,957

Cambodians trained in
water safety

953

Cambodian children trained
in survival swimming



Helpcode Cambodia

Helpcode is an international non-governmental organization established in Genoa, Italy, in 1988, with a Swiss branch founded in Geneva in 2014,. The organization's mission focuses on ensuring that every child has the protection of a family, a quality education, and a community in which to grow and develop their potential. Helpcode operates in various countries across Africa, Asia, and Europe, prioritizing the rights and welfare of children, with interventions designed to initiate and support sustainable social, environmental, and economic development. In Cambodia, Helpcode has been present since 2006, initially focusing on education and child sponsorship before expanding into broader community safety initiatives.

Since 2018, Helpcode has implemented the Drowning Prevention Program (DPP) to address these risks. The program operates primarily in the coastal province of Sihanoukville, the Koh Rong Archipelago, and has expanded to Kampot, Kep, Kandal, and the informal settlements of Phnom Penh. There are also proposals to scale operations to Siem Reap and the Tonle Sap Lake region due to high flood risks.



We gratefully acknowledge the dedication of Helpcode staff, partner organizations, school leaders, teachers, communities, and the families who welcomed our teams and trusted the program.

This impact report reflects available documentation, data, and observations from 2020-2025. While every effort was made to ensure accuracy and fairness, interpretations in this report are those of the author and do not necessarily represent the official positions of partner organizations.

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The DPP Program

Drowning is recognized as a "silent epidemic" in Cambodia, posing a severe threat to child survival, particularly in rural areas where daily life is intertwined with open water sources like ponds, rivers, and rice paddies. According to World Health Organization (WHO) data, drowning is a leading cause of death for children aged 5–14, with over 90% of fatalities occurring in low- and middle-income countries. In Cambodia, specific environmental risks such as seasonal flooding, combined with a widespread lack of swimming skills and emergency response knowledge among the population, leave children acutely vulnerable.



The DPP program is built on a competency-based model delivering interventions through three main pillars:

Water Safety and CPR Education

Students, teachers, and community focal points receive training on 10 to 13 key water safety messages (e.g., "**Spot the Danger**," "**Keep Yourself Safe**") and practical instruction on Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR), equipping bystanders to intervene effectively during emergencies. This is based on the RNLI Aquatic Survival Programme

Swim for Survival

In partnership with the Khmer Swimming Federation and local swim schools, the program provides practical swimming lessons to children, ensuring they meet specific competency standards to survive in water

Community Awareness and Risk Mitigation

The project actively engages local stakeholders to map high-risk environmental zones and distributes Information, Education, and Communication (IEC) materials. To reach wider audiences, particularly during school closures, Helpcode collaborates with Education Broadcasting Cambodia (EBC) to disseminate digital training content and safety videos

2018-2025



This report summarizes the cumulative impact of the DPP from 2018 to 2025, utilizing the RE-AIM framework [Reach, Effectiveness, Adoption, Implementation, and Maintenance] to structure the assessment. This document presents a selection of findings from the first formal evaluation of the programming, analyzing outputs and outcomes to inform future growth, sustainability, and advocacy efforts. In the past year, the DPP has integrated new monitoring and evaluation activities into its operations, establishing a foundation for more in-depth impact reporting and data-driven insights in the near future

Data collection encompassed various sources, including program data spreadsheets, community interviews, post-participant surveys, and a detailed cost breakdown analysis. Insights derived from these methodologies inform future improvements and highlight the program's ability to expand drowning prevention initiatives effectively.

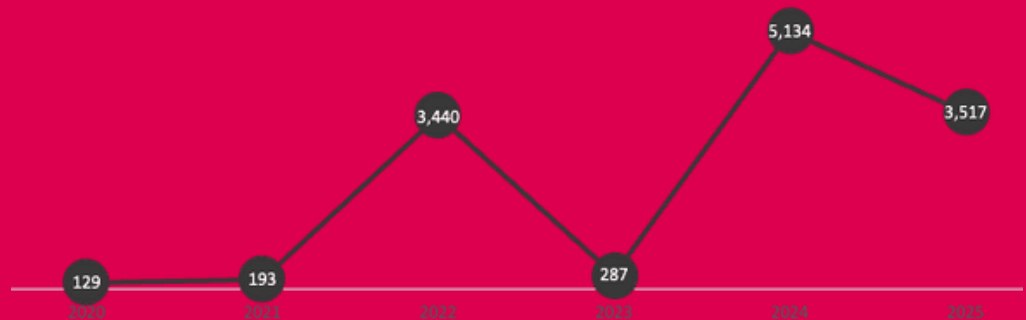
Shelton RC, Chambers DA, Glasgow RE. An Extension of RE-AIM to Enhance Sustainability: Addressing Dynamic Context and Promoting Health Equity Over Time. *Front Public Health*. 2020 May 12;8:134. doi: 10.3389/fpubh.2020.00134. PMID: 32478025; PMCID: PMC7235159.

Program Reach

Water Safety and CPR

Training activities have reached 10,957

Cambodians - including school children, teachers and principals, local authorities, key villagers, and community members



Almost 1,000 children participated in Swimming for Survival training - taking them from a state of severe drowning vulnerability to being proficient in basic swimming skills



47.8% of DPP participants were female

Participants were from 38 distinct schools



School children ranged from grade 1 to 12

The program has reached 15 target communities



The DPP has established a significant presence in Cambodia's high-risk coastal and rural regions, primarily operating in Preah Sihanouk, Kampot, Kep, the Koh Rong Archipelago, and the informal settlements of Phnom Penh

Effectiveness

Program staff have started collecting data on the effectiveness of programming. This includes collecting pre- and post-program surveys to understand changes in knowledge, attitudes, and practices (KAP). As of right now, accurate drowning data at a regional level is not available. Helpcode is working with government and the community to better track local drowning incidents or near-miss reports.



Anecdotal evidence suggests that Helpcode's DPP has led to a meaningful decline in local drowning incidents. By prioritizing education and practical safety skills, the program has strengthened family capacity to prevent water-related harm and increased community awareness of child safety around water.

Survival Swimming Success

In 2025, 100% of children assessed for basic swimming competency passed, which is up from 83% in 2020

Improved Household Water Safety

Families have begun constructing bamboo safety barriers around hazardous water sources (jars, tanks) within their homes, a direct application of the safety knowledge shared by the program

Community Infrastructure

Effectiveness is demonstrated by the proactive installation of warning signage and community fencing around ponds and ditches by school directors and local authorities

Confidence Levels

Qualitative feedback indicates that training has significantly improved community confidence in knowing how to stay safe and take action during drowning incidents

New Technical Skills

Prior to the DPP, CPR techniques "were not known by anybody in the villages," indicating a 100% increase in knowledge

Enhanced Behaviour Around Water

Observational data suggests children have adopted safe behaviors, such as carrying floating objects (like plastic bottles) when playing near water and avoiding unsupervised play

Digital Reach

Educational videos on water safety have been viewed by at least 1,000 community members. A DPP feature on the website of social influencer DJ Nana received 16,000 hits within the first 15 minutes of posting.

Information Sharing

Over 1500 information, education, and communication materials have been distributed.

Knowledge Transfer

The DPP maintains a robust network of **over 15 active strategic collaborations**, spanning government bodies, technical swimming partners, international NGOs, and media entities (see list on “Partners” page).

Helpcode has actively shared knowledge and influenced policy through international presentations (**World Conference on Drowning Prevention 2025**; Dubai 2022; Vancouver 2021), a major local dissemination event (2025), quarterly briefings with the provincial MoEYS, and annual World Drowning Prevention Day activities that mobilize hundreds of community members. Staff coordinated the Khmer adaptation of the RNLI Aquatic Survival Programme Manual for frontline use.

Operationally, Helpcode’s “Swim for Survival” and CPR components are

designed to implement government goals, and **partnerships with the Khmer Swimming Federation** support advocacy for swimming in the national curriculum. The program is moving toward institutional integration by training government teams to deliver courses, ensuring sustainability and close alignment with national priorities.

Beyond direct intervention, Helpcode actively collaborates with the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport (MoEYS) and has played a key role in the national dialogue on safety. This includes contributing to the **drafting of Cambodia’s National Strategic Plan on Drowning Prevention and Management 2025–2030**, ensuring the program's objectives are integrated into the country's long-term development framework



Looking Forward

Expand to High-Risk Flood Zones

Extend program operations into Siem Reap Province and the Tonle Sap Lake region, as well as the Mekong River communities and Kandal Province, which are identified as high-risk areas due to seasonal flooding

Increase Early Intervention

Expand practical swimming and water safety lessons to cover a larger number of primary schools

Monitor & Evaluate

Deploy new data collection methods, including GIS mapping, to assess impact and strategize for future programming

Expand Train the Trainer

The "Train the Trainer" model has been effective, with 107 teachers now acting as focal points to support ongoing implementation, ensuring the program's effectiveness continues

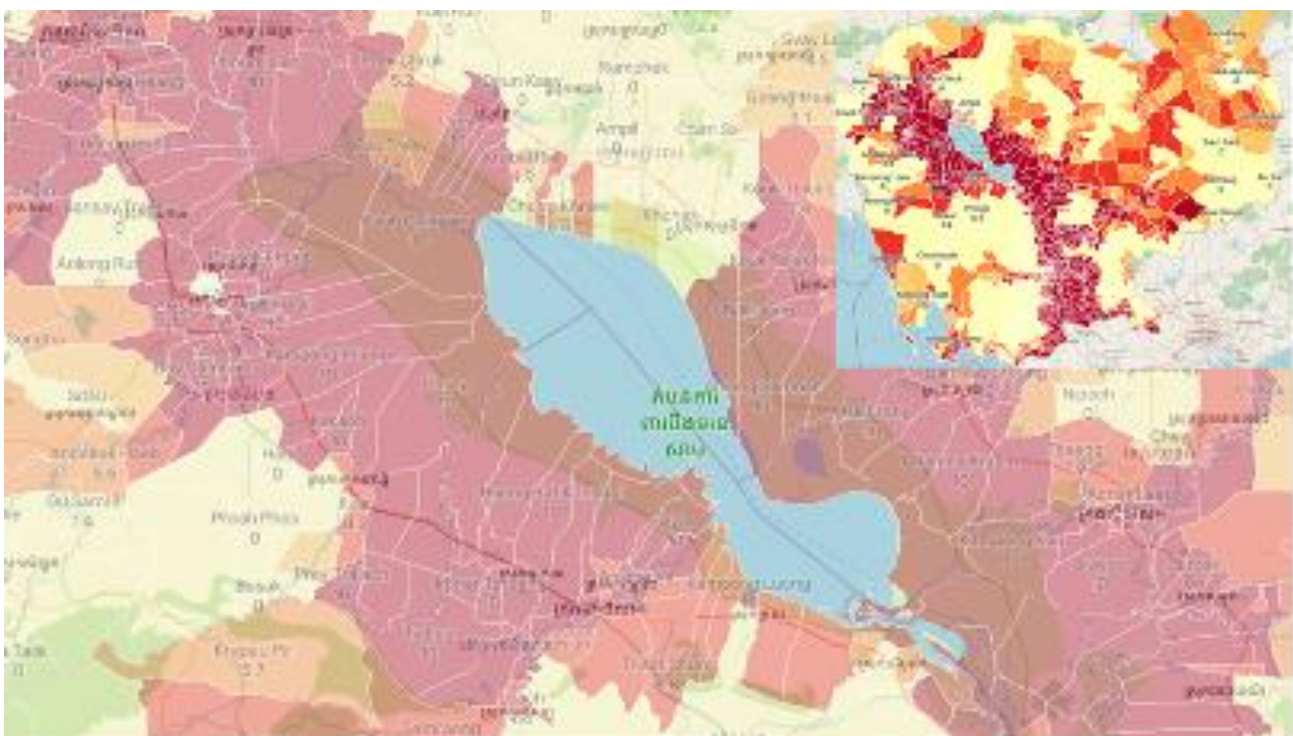


Figure 1 DCR/ Dataset, overlay flooding exposure for exports in the Tonle Sap Lake Area, commune level distribution

helpcode

THE RIGHT TO BE A CHILD

