The Royal Life Saving Society

Position Statement

The Royal Life Saving Society and the Connection
of the UN Sustainable Development Goals with
the Global Drowning Prevention Effort

February 2019

COMMONWEALTH
DROWNING
PREVENTION

Background

The Royal Life Saving Society

The Royal Life Saving Society (RLSS), established in 1891, is a Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO) charity registered in the United Kingdom (Charity Commission No 306094) and is governed by Royal Charter. RLSS is accredited to the Commonwealth Secretariat as a Civil Society Organisation.
Our vision is: *"No person in the Commonwealth should drown".*

The mission of the RLSS is to reduce drowning across the Commonwealth nations.
This will be achieved by advocating for drowning prevention, facilitating collaborations and effective interventions to reduce drowning risk and through lifesaving education, rescue, and resuscitation programs.

Background

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

On 25 September 2015, the United Nations General Assembly adopted the resolution Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development[1], adopted by all United Nations Member States in 2015, provides a shared blueprint for peace and prosperity for people and the planet, now and into the future.

The 17 UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and 169 targets demonstrate the scale and ambition of the Agenda for Sustainable Development; an urgent call for action by all countries –

developed and developing – in a global partnership. The SDGs seek to realize the human rights of all and to achieve gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls. Ending poverty and other deprivations must go hand-in-hand with strategies that improve health and education, reduce inequality, and spur economic growth – all while tackling climate change and working to preserve our oceans and forests.

In order to make the 2030 Agenda a reality, broad ownership of the SDGs must translate into a strong commitment by all stakeholders to implement the global goals.

The following image provides a diagrammatical representation of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals.

---

[1] https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/post2015/transformingourworld

World Health Organisation – 2014 Global Report on Drowning

The WHO Global Report on Drowning[2] released in November 2014 reported that 'drowning is a serious and neglected public health threat claiming the lives of 372 000 people a year worldwide'. Further, 'more than 90% of these deaths occur in low- and middle-income countries. 'This death toll is almost two thirds that of malnutrition and well over half that of malaria…'.

The WHO Report goes on to highlight that drowning has 'major impacts on children and youth'. 'Drowning is preventable. Proven strategies implemented at household, community and national level range from teaching basic swim skills and installing barriers that control exposure to water hazards, to providing safe spaces for children such as crèches and learning about safe rescue'. The following infographic depicts the 10 Actions to Prevent Drowning as recommended by the WHO in its Global Report on Drowning and to which RLSS aligns its efforts with the SDGs.
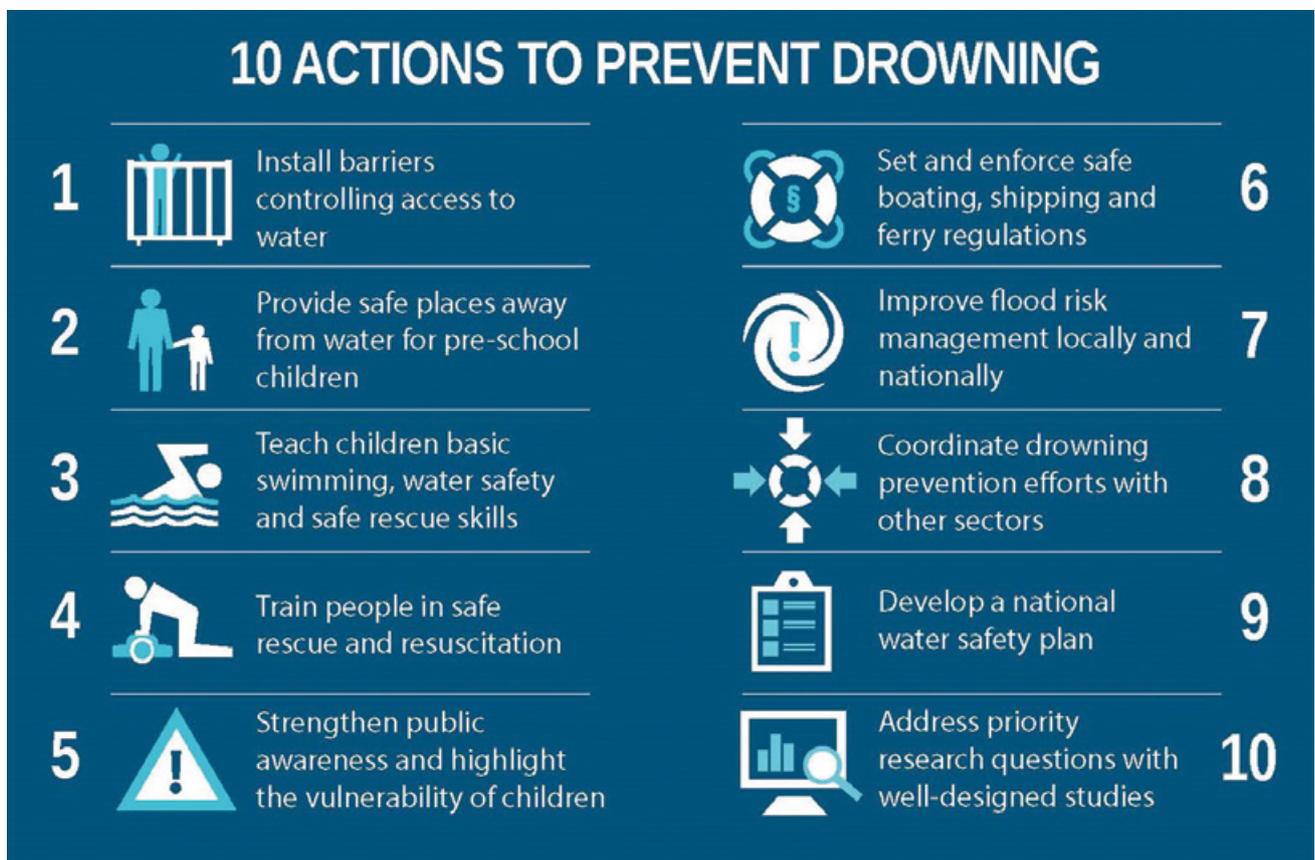
This Position Statement outlines the strong alignment of RLSS priorities with the relevant SDGs and the WHO Global Report on Drowning recommendations in continuing RLSS drowning prevention efforts through allied partners. RLSS priorities and actions are intentionally limited due to restricted resources and to improve impact.

---

[2] World Health Organization. (2014). Global report on drowning: preventing a leading killer. World Health Organisation. http://www.who.int/iris/handle/10665/143893

UN Sustainable Development Goals and RLSS Drowning Prevention

The RLSS has aligned its efforts with the following SDGs that will result in the greatest impact for community drowning prevention.

1. **Primary RLSS Focus** - the drowning prevention work that RLSS and its allied partners are well-placed to perform will directly contribute towards addressing one (or more) of the SDGs and identified targets that align with our core mission of preventing drowning.

Example: A drowning prevention programme delivered in a country that has a high rate of drowning deaths in under 5s directly targets SDG3.2 – *By 2030, end preventable deaths of and children under 5 years of age.*

3.2: By 2030, end preventable deaths of new-borns and children under 5 years of age.
RLSS FACILITATION: Reduce Under 5years drowning mortality by 50% by 2030.

3.4: By 2030, reduce by one third premature mortality from non-communicable diseases through prevention and treatment and promote mental health and well-being.
RLSS FACILITATION: Reduce child and adult drowning by at least one third.

3.5: Strengthen the prevention and treatment of substance abuse, including narcotic drug abuse and harmful use of alcohol.
RLSS FACILITATION: Substance (e.g. alcohol) abuse is a major contributor to drowning mortality in many nations. Therefore, a specific target for substance use reduce related drowning by 50% is appropriate.

4.2: By 2030, ensure that all children have access to quality early childhood development, care, and pre-primary education so that they are ready for primary education.
RLSS FACILITATION: Drowning prevention interventions such as swimming and water safety education and barriers preventing access to water to be inclusive for all at risk children.

4.4: By 2030, substantially increase the number of youth and adults who have relevant skills, including technical and vocational skills, for employment, decent jobs, and entrepreneurship.

RLSS FACILITATION: Drowning prevention intervention education to be part of the school system in all nations such that all children should learn drowning prevention knowledge and skills.

17.9: Enhance international support for implementing effective and targeted capacity-building in developing countries to support national plans to implement all the sustainable development goals, including through North-South, South-South and triangular cooperation.
RLSS FACILITATION: Include national and community drowning prevention plans and actions.

17.16: Enhance the global partnership for sustainable development, complemented by multi-stakeholder partnerships that mobilize and share knowledge, expertise, technology, and financial resources, to support the achievement of the sustainable development goals in all countries, in particular developing countries.

RLSS FACILITATION: Include drowning prevention research, plans and actions.

17.18: By 2020, enhance capacity-building support to developing countries, including for least developed countries and small island developing States, to increase significantly the availability of high-quality, timely and reliable data disaggregated by income, gender, age, race, ethnicity, migratory status, disability, geographic location and other characteristics relevant in national contexts.
RLSS FACILITATION: Include fatal and non-fatal drowning data.

The RLSS will link its primary drowning prevention efforts and focus on the above SDGs.

2. **Embedded SDGs** – the following SDGs are embedded in all that we do. RLSS ensures its drowning prevention public health interventions, training and leadership is available equally to all.

Example: A learn to swim programme that equally targets males and females in a community with gender imbalance targets SDG5.4 Gender Equality.

5.4: Recognize and value unpaid care and domestic work through the provision of public services, infrastructure and social protection policies and the promotion of shared responsibility within the household and the family as nationally appropriate.

RLSS FACILITATION: Ensure the drowning prevention public health interventions, training and leadership is available equally to all.

10.7: Facilitate orderly, safe, regular, and responsible migration and mobility of people, including through the implementation of planned and well-managed migration policies.

RLSS FACILITATION: Drowning prevention to be included in this discussion and action/reaction planning.

3. **Advocacy Opportunities** – the following SDGs are generally work that is performed by other organisations in other sectors and often have an incidental impact on drowning prevention. RLSS will explore drowning prevention advocacy opportunities as resources and collaborations provide.

Example: A clean water project that provides pumps and closed wells into communities that previously accessed water from the river reduces exposure to the aquatic hazard. This targets SDG6 *ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all* – reduced access to water will reduce drowning.

1.1 By 2030, eradicate extreme poverty for all people everywhere, currently measured as people living on less than $1.25 a day.
RLSS FACILITATION: The burden of drowning is greater in low-and middle-income nations and communities of lower socioeconomic conditions. Poverty reduction reduces drowning mortality and morbidity risk.

1.5 By 2030, build the resilience of the poor and those in vulnerable situations and reduce their exposure and vulnerability to climate-related extreme events and other economic, social, and environmental shocks and disasters.
RLSS FACILITATION: Include drowning risk reduction by embedding knowledge and skills in at risk communities prior to life-threatening events.

6.1: By 2030, achieve universal and equitable access to safe and affordable drinking water for all.
RLSS FACILITATION: Fundamental infrastructure improvement is associated with reduced drowning mortality burden, e.g. Covered wells, and barriers to unintended water entry.
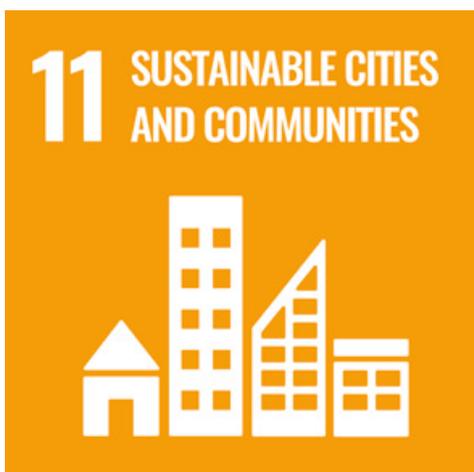
11.1: By 2030, ensure access for all to adequate, safe, and affordable housing and basic services and upgrade slums.
RLSS FACILITATION: Reduce drowning by eliminating unsupervised access to water by children.

11.2: By 2030, provide access to safe, affordable, accessible and sustainable transport systems for all, improving road safety, notably by expanding public transport, with special attention to the needs of those in vulnerable situations, women, children, persons with disabilities and older persons.
RLSS FACILITATION: Reduce drowning by improving safe water transport regulations, legislation, and enforcement. This would include improved regulation, legislation and enforcement of lifejacket wearing for all watercraft under

9 meters in length and for wearing personal floatation for high risk watercraft activities.

11.5: By 2030, significantly reduce the number of deaths and the number of people affected and substantially decrease the direct economic losses relative to global gross domestic product caused by disasters, including water-related disasters, with a focus on protecting the poor and people in vulnerable situation.
RLSS FACILITATION: Drowning prevention planning and action to be part of disaster risk reduction to reduce drowning deaths.

13.1: Strengthen resilience and adaptive capacity to climate-related hazards and natural disasters in all countries.
RLSS FACILITATION: Include global drowning prevention resilience and adaptive capacity in climate action.

13.2: Integrate climate change measures into national policies, strategies, and planning.
RESPONSE: Include drowning prevention.

13.3: Improve education, awareness-raising and human and institutional capacity on climate change mitigation, adaptation, impact reduction and early warning.
RLSS FACILITATION: Include drowning prevention.

Implementation

RLSS will lead and facilitate members their governments and allied partners to implement the necessary actions to give effect to this Position Statement.

How will RLSS and Members Measure its Drowning Prevention Impact Against the SDGs?

RLSS will aim to measure the impact of its work and that of allied partners, including through the following measurements using available resources. This includes data sources such as the WHO Global Health Estimates[3] and the Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation (IHME) Global Health Data Exchange (GHDx)[4] and other relevant sources.

1. An increase in the number of Commonwealth nations with higher quality drowning mortality data to inform community-based action, effective policies and legislation and further research
2. An increase in community-based actions for drowning prevention within Commonwealth nations
3. An improvement in effective policy and legislation for drowning prevention in Commonwealth nations
4. A reduction in drowning mortality in Commonwealth nations
5. An increase in the engagement of allied partners (i.e. Government, NGOs, Academic and Industry) in drowning risk reduction in Commonwealth nations

Acknowledgements

The RLSS acknowledges this Position Statement includes information sourced from the following persons and organisations since 2016.

- Dr Aminur Rahman MD PhD, Bangladesh
- Dr Steve Beerman MD, Canada
- Dr Clive Patrickson PhD MBA LLM, Australia
- Mr Norman Farmer ESM, Australia
- Royal National Lifeboat Institution (RNLI), United Kingdom

- World Health Organisation (WHO), Geneva
- Division for Sustainable Development Goals (DSDG) in the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA)

---

[3] WHO Global Health Estimates - https://www.who.int/healthinfo/global_burden_disease/en/
[4] IHME Global Health Data Exchange - http://ghdx.healthdata.org/

The Royal Life Saving Society,
Commonwealth Headquarters,
Red Hill House, 227 London Rd,
Worcester WR5 2JG, UNITED KINGDOM
Tel: +44 (0)1789 774229
Email: commonwealth@rlss.org.uk
Website: http://www.rlsscommonwealth.org