



An Advisory for Water Risk and Drowning Prevention

A growing number of Nepalis--particularly students, tourists, and migrant workers drown abroad each year. This stems from Nepal's limited swimming culture and water safety education, coupled with a lack of risk perception regarding unfamiliar water environments like oceans, beaches, rip currents, and coasts. Drowning is a preventable tragedy that causes immense loss of life wherever incidents occur, impacting families and next of kin back home just as deeply. According to the World Health Organization estimates, [over 1,500 people lose their lives to drowning every year](#) in Nepal with a rate of 5.4 per 100,000 population. This underscores the need for a system that recognises water risks and instils lifesaving skills in schools and communities. Similarly, there's a need for a system that familiarises prospective students, aspiring tourists, and migrant workers with water-related risks or drowning hazards in their destination countries, concurrently with their trip preparations. In this regard, Nepali communities overseas can also be mobilised to undertake these activities, including offering swimming lessons and conducting awareness campaigns. By working together, these measures can equip Nepalis with lifesaving skills and significantly reduce drowning deaths.

This policy brief aims to present key facts and figures about drowning. It will inform policymakers and stakeholders about the issue of drowning among Nepalese people abroad, with the goal of facilitating a specific course of action to save lives from this preventable cause.

The Magnitude of the Problem:

The Royal Life Saving Society of Australia recognized that multicultural communities in Australia face a higher risk of drowning due to cultural differences in swimming ability and water safety knowledge. This includes [visitors, international students, and residents born overseas](#). As evidenced by the fact that 46% of the [5,700 people who drowned in Australia between 2002 and 2022 were overseas-born](#). It is also a fact that many migrants arrive in Australia without prior swimming experience and without familiarity with water safety, swimming, and lifesaving techniques. To address this growing concern, multicultural communities in Australia have been considering [providing more information to their diverse communities regarding water safety](#) and life-saving skills. Australia is not the only country where Nepalis drown; incidents reported in countries like the United States, the United Kingdom, Portugal, Kuwait, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Japan, and India in the past few years. Researchers estimate that [at least two dozen Nepalis drown abroad every year](#). This risk extends to Nepali migrant workers and students alike.

Challenges:

Nepal, a landlocked country where water safety and saving lives from drowning is not a priority. Thus, to learn about the water risks in island and coastal countries is far beyond consideration. People are forced to be in contact with unprotected water bodies in the absence of household pipe-water supplies and bridges. [Drowning often occurs as a result of daily activities such as bathing, river crossing, and fishing](#). However, nearly all of the drowning incidents overseas takes place during leisure activities. Among the visitors, who drowned in a period of 10 years in Australia, [a very high percentage \(84%\) were males and youths aged \(25-34 years\) comprised the biggest number \(21%\)](#). A common factor is the lack of safety measures followed or ignoring warning signs posted near dangerous waters. This suggests international visitors have unique safety needs, requiring tailored prevention based on the purpose of travel and country of origin. Taking risks and not knowing the rules and regulations of the place you're visiting, along with difficulty getting safety information in your language can all be dangerous.



Do's and Dont's:

<p>Do's:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Look out for warning signs around the lakes, oceans, and picnic areas. • Check the local authority's guidance and instructions for swimming or fishing. • Always use a lifejacket in open water or a boat. • Provide flotation devices for weaker swimmers. • Install gates for barriers around a pool, or open water, if you have young children, and make sure the latches are out of their reach. • Keep pool decks and docks clear of debris. • Never swim alone, keep a buddy. • Establish no running on decks and no diving as water rules. • Keep a list of emergency contacts and first aid kit handy 	<p>Don'ts:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overlook warning signs near water, it can be deadly • Violate local authority rules on swimming, fishing or picnicking etc. • Enter into water without swimming skills • Let new swimmers into water without floating devices • Leave young children unattended or unsupervised when in or around the water. • Serve alcohol in or around the pool. • Swim alone. • Drink alcohol and operate a boat. • Running on pool decks and diving into unknown water and pool. • Have sharp objects in or around pool decks and docks. • Swim at night or during a storm
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Recommendations:

- To most effectively reduce Nepali drowning fatalities abroad, water safety education interventions should be implemented in Nepal prior to migrant departure.
- To better prepare Nepali students for life abroad, educators/consultancies should consider incorporating modules on foreign customs and water safety hazards into the curriculum, going beyond just the English languages (IELTS, TOEFL etc.) tests.
- The Ministry of Education, Science, and Technology should include information on water-related risks and safety measures while issuing No Objection Letters for studying abroad.
- The Foreign missions in Nepal issuing visas should consider providing water safety policies implemented in their countries so that the visitors are aware of potential drowning risks.
- Nepal Diplomatic Missions abroad, NRNA, and other Nepali organizations in the destination countries should raise awareness in collaboration with respective water safety organisations.

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