

Effectiveness of SeaSafe lifeguarding in Cox's Bazar beach Bangladesh

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Background: drowning is the leading cause of death among children in Bangladesh and claims the lives of 18,000 children each year. The southern coastal city Cox's Bazar is one of the largest sandy beaches in the world, and has become a popular tourist destination over the last decade. Fatal drowning on the beach has become common for tourists, including a number of high-profile drowning deaths that have shocked the nation. Most high income countries have professionally trained lifeguards to ensure the safety of tourists on the beach, however prior to the introduction of the SeaSafe programme there were no trained lifeguards on the beach in Cox's Bazar. In July 2014 new full time lifeguards were appointed in Cox's Bazar beach. This presentation describes the services they provided over a six month period.

Objective: assessment of the lifeguard services in management of drowning casualties provided by low resource setting lifeguards in Cox's Bazar beach Bangladesh.

Methodology: with the support of Royal National Lifeboat Institution (RNLI) the International Drowning Research Centre, Bangladesh (IDRC-B) developed a beach lifeguard program called SeaSafe. Since July 2014 10 paid lifeguards have been employed to provide lifeguard services on Cox's Bazar beach. International level lifeguard training was provided by the RNLI. All lifeguards were also trained in First aid and CPR to provide support in medical emergencies. Reporting forms and tools for data collection were developed to record incidents, and the lifeguards were given training in how to complete the forms.

Results: collected data from 25th of July 2014 to 25th of January have been analyzed. In total 56 casualties were rescued from the sea - 51 male and 5 female. Adolescents were found to be the most vulnerable group. 80% of all rescues were conducted in the lifeguarded zone, between the red and yellow flags. Nearly 62% of incidence was due to rip currents. About 54% of casualties were using inflatables far from shore before being rescued. Lifeguards used surf boards or rescue tube in 84% of rescues. Among the casualties 88% were not from the Cox's Bazar area.

Conclusion: lifeguarding is an essential part of any tourist beach, a lot of lives can be saved by providing lifeguard activities. Further long term research is needed to establish an effective lifeguard system in low resources setting.

Key words: SeaSafe, Lifeguard, Rescue, IDRC-B, RNLI, Drowning

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