

AN IMPACTING TOOLS TO REDUCE DROWNING AMONG CHILDREN

The use of fresh water drowning prevention cartoon video, a comic book, a refrigerator magnet and a comic character of 2m tall named KIM - the crab.

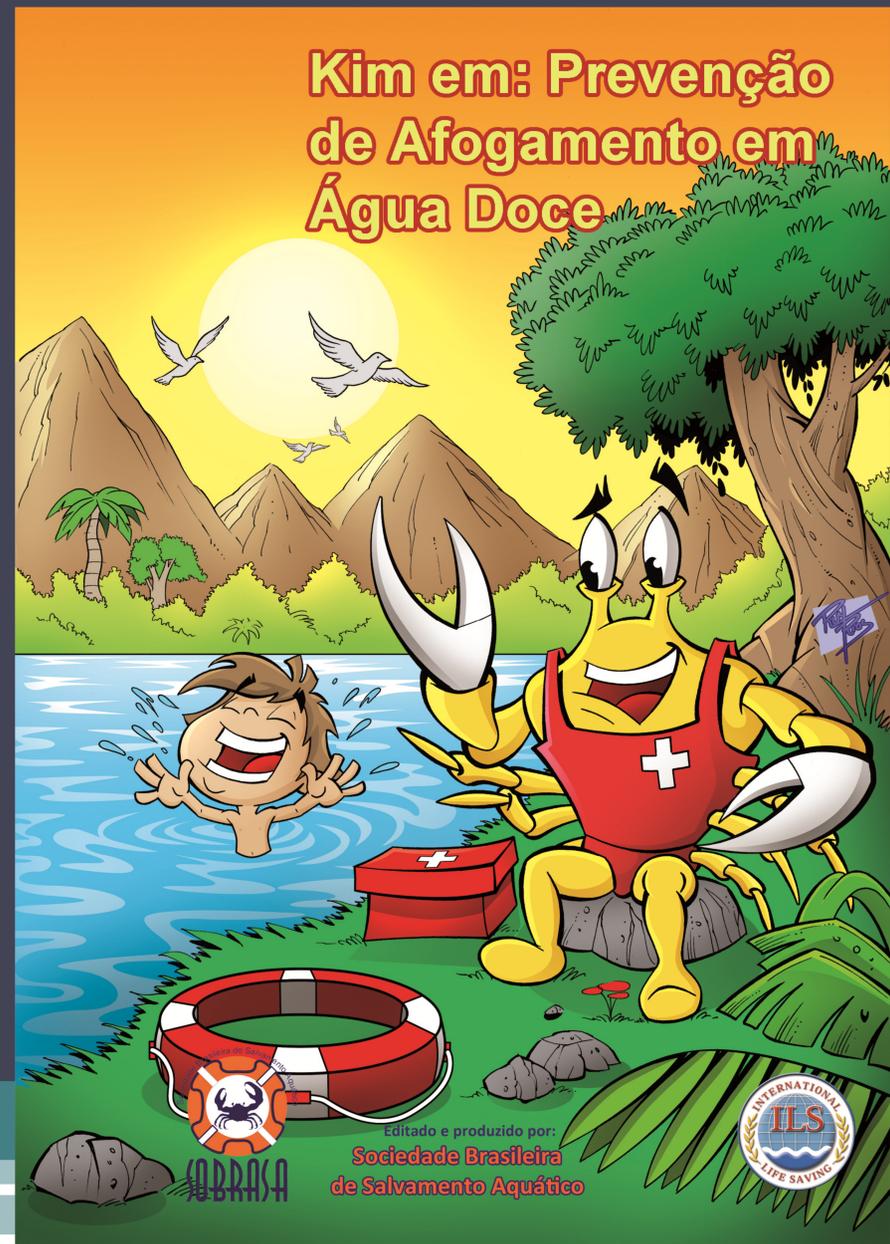
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The Brazilian Lifesaving Society – Sobrasa - has been working since its foundation on the ways to promote drowning prevention, especially among children. One of our most efficiently tool is a running project at schools around the country where we have been using prevention's beach safety messages presented by a cartoon video¹. These strategies have been so successful along this last years that drive us to do a drowning prevention campaign exclusive to fresh water prevention.

The project “Drowning Prevention at Fresh Water” is an effort to spread the drowning prevention message to children into a funny, uniform, easy to spread and interesting way in Brazil and developing countries.

The project has 4 different tools working together during 30 to 40 minutes session targeted to children on age 5 to 9 years old: the lifeguard (1), the video (2), the materials (3) and Kim (4).

1. A lifeguard dressing appropriately carrying his personal equipment make a visit to elementary school class. He explains what is his job and the importance to prevent drowning in 5 minutes.
2. The “Drowning prevention cartoon video at fresh water” is shown (total time length 6 minutes).
3. All kids receive a comic book (figure 1) to read and fulfill the blank spaces with prevention messages. This book comes with a “refrigerator magnetic” attached to the comic book, recommending the parents to use at home (figure 2).
4. When all seems to end, KIM, the crab, arrive dressing as a lifeguard (figure 3) to answer the final doubts.



The Video was a co-partner project with ILS-Americas. Messages transmission is much visual as possible, but also available in 3 languages (Portuguese ,English and Spanish).

Contents were based on an international task force on open water drowning prevention – 18 drowning prevention experts from 12 countries – which established guidelines for families and individuals recreating at any open water site². Our project prevention messages were focus at rivers, lakes, ponds and pools. When possible, specific messages as lifejacket use, lifeguard importance (using sunglasses and sun protection) and some subtle important messages on prevention were reinforced. Time frame duration is less than 6 minutes, with an introduction information about drowning statistics in Brazil, Americas and in the world, focusing on the main 12 general fresh water prevention messages: 1 - Swim in areas with lifeguards and obey all safety signs and warning flags; 2 - Near or into water, watch your children 100% of time; 3- Learn swimming and water safety survival skills; 4 - Learn safe ways of rescuing others without putting yourself in danger; 5 - Always swim with others; 6 – While in a boat, know how and when to use a life jacket; 7 – Be careful in rivers and lakes: hide currents and holes can drown you in seconds; 8 - Never go in the water after drinking alcohol or heavy meals; 9 - Always enter shallow and unknown water feet first; 10 - Floating objects are an “illusion of safety”, always use a lifejacket; 11 – Kids can drown any where, so fence, cover, flip off, close or vanish any water puddle in or around your house; 12 – “It was just a blink and he gone” is a frequently happen tragedy, don't let goes to you - be aware - transmit these messages to others.



This project looks to be an excellent strategy to impact children and easily reach distant in-land areas in Brazil and developing countries in helping to reduce drowning.



Bibliographical references:

1. Jorge Cerqueira , David Szpilman; Cartoon Drowning Prevention Video – A way to reach children in 8 minutes; World Water Safety, Matosinhos – Portugal 2007, Book of Abstracts, ISBN: 978-989-95519-0-9, p60 (awarded paper).
2. Moran K, Quan L, Franklin R, Bennett E. Where the evidence and expert opinion meet: a review of open-water: recreational safety messages. Int J Aquatic Res Educ 2011;5:251-70