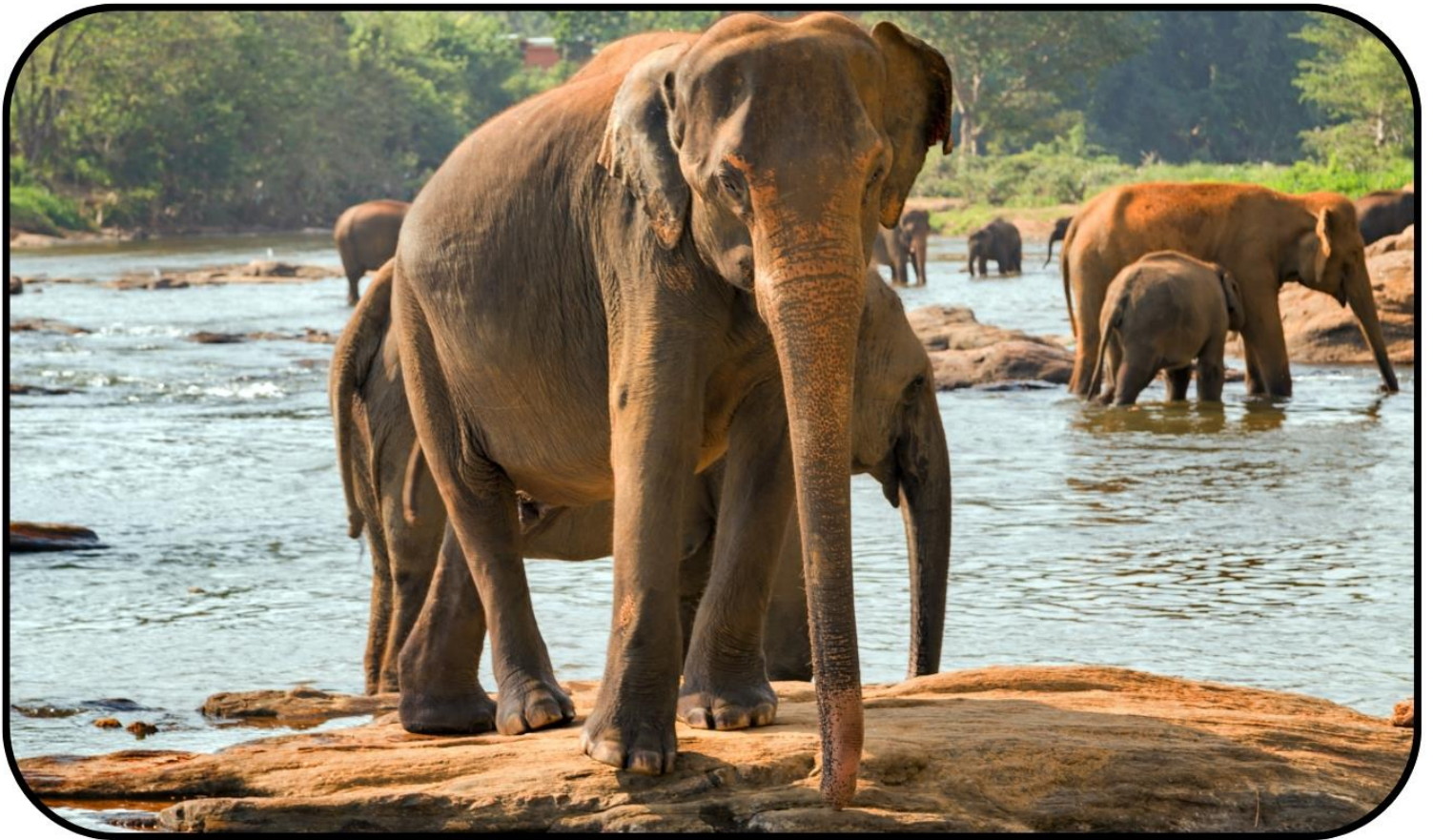


HERO STORIES

International Awareness Day for Avoidable Deaths (IAD4AD)

2026



VOLUNTARY COMMITMENTS
SENDAI FRAMEWORK
FOR DISASTER RISK REDUCTION 2015-2030



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Date Published: 16 March 2026

Suggested Citation: Jena, S.K¹. Moore, N.L². Gupta, P³. MacLeod, L⁴. (2026) *Hero Stories: International Awareness Day for Avoidable Deaths (IAD4AD) 2026*. UK and Japan: Avoidable Deaths Network Publication.

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About Avoidable Deaths Network (ADN): ADN is a global-local membership network dedicated to reducing disaster deaths that are avoidable in low- and middle-income countries. ADN is a member of the Sendai Framework's Voluntary Commitment Platform and the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) Leading Edge Programme Networks and Partnerships Group.



1. Introduction

Every day, ordinary people take extraordinary actions to protect others, reduce disaster risks, and strengthen their communities. Some save lives through innovation. Others mobilise neighbours to solve neglected problems ignored during or post disasters. Many work quietly, by driving a snakebite victim on their motorbike to the nearest hospital without recognition, yet their impact saves lives and transforms entire communities.

Our First Hero The ADN Hero Award 2025 went to ADN Regional Coordinator, Ms. Tahira Khan for her amazing work to reduce avoidable deaths from well fall in Pakistan.

This year, we invited ADN Members and the public to nominate individuals whose courage, leadership, and commitment have prevented harm, protected lives, or created safer futures. Whether they introduced a simple idea that changed everything, rallied a community to act, or stood up when no one else would, their story deserves to be told. Because they are unsung heroes.

Someone who has:

- Reduced preventable injuries or deaths
- Led a community-driven safety or risk-reduction initiative
- Overcome barriers to protect others
- Created measurable, lasting change

The Hero Awards are selected by an ADN Panel of Experts, chaired by the ADN Presidents, Professor Nibedita Ray-Bennett and Dr. Hideyuki Shiroshita. The Panel of Experts applies eight selection criteria, using the criterion most relevant to each case.

Whilst there can only be one award winner, we feel that nominees who meet our 'Hero Criteria' must be featured on our website, with their stories shared to raise awareness and inspire others.



2. Meet the 2026 Heros

2.1. Reducing elephant-human conflict in rural India

Mr. Kamal Lochan Panda, Assistant Librarian, Fakir Mohan University, India

Mr. Kamal Lochan Panda, Assistant Librarian at Fakir Mohan University, India has led sustained efforts to reduce life threatening human-elephant conflicts in vulnerable rural communities of Balasore, Odisha, India. Over the past three years, he has worked directly with farmers and high-risk villages affected by crop raiding and sudden elephant movement, where panic, injury, and economic loss are common. Recognizing habitat fragmentation as a root cause, Kamal introduced community led awareness sessions focused on safe response practices during elephant presence, prevention of nighttime exposure, and coordinated village communication systems. Without institutional funding, he mobilized youth volunteers and local leaders to promote protection of elephant corridors and responsible land practices. His work bridges conservation and human safety. By encouraging early warning sharing, discouraging retaliatory actions, and building trust between communities and forest officials, he has helped reduce risky encounters that often lead to fatalities or severe injury. Kamal's leadership reflects innovation through low cost, locally driven solutions. His voluntary commitment, public advocacy through writing and speaking, and persistence in underserved regions demonstrate transformative grassroots action that protects both human life and biodiversity.

Kamal's initiatives strengthened village level preparedness during elephant movement, reducing panic-based reactions and unsafe night time exposure. Communities adopted coordinated alert systems and safer crop guarding practices. Farmers report improved awareness of non-violent conflict mitigation methods and stronger cooperation with forest authorities. His engagement has contributed to lowering risky human wildlife encounters, protecting livelihoods, and promoting sustainable habitat preservation. The continued community ownership of these practices shows long term sustainability and replicability in other conflict prone regions.

Kamal Lochan Panda works voluntarily, often in remote and high-risk areas, driven by a belief that environmental protection is directly linked to saving human lives. His work has shifted local perception from conflict to coexistence, encouraging youth participation in conservation and responsible risk behaviour. As a writer and public speaker, he amplifies community voices and promotes ethical, inclusive conservation practices. Recognizing him will highlight how grassroots leadership can prevent avoidable harm while strengthening ecological resilience.



2.2. Reducing burn deaths and injuries amongst vulnerable communities Kenya

Mr. José Njuki-Imwe Ngunjiri, Fire Safety Officer, Advocate and Educator, Africa Fire Mission, Kenya

José Njuki-Imwe Ngunjiri, Africa Fire Mission, Kenya, has transformed community safety from an abstract concept into practical, lifesaving action in Kenya. By leveraging personal experience as a burns survivor, José has dedicated himself to preventing avoidable deaths through hands-on fire prevention and safety training initiatives. He has empowered community members to act when seconds matter most. His work has strengthened local capacity, ensuring that lifesaving interventions begin long before formal emergency services arrive. José is focused on sustainability. He delivers training, develops local champions, mentors new instructors, and builds community ownership around prevention. As a result, knowledge spreads, preparedness improves, and safer behaviours become embedded in everyday life. He is even the star of a children's fire safety show that was created and aired on public television in Kenya. José is replicating his work in Nigeria, Malawi and Zambia. In contexts where preventable injuries and deaths are far too common, José's leadership is closing critical gaps in response and resilience. His work saves lives, repeatedly, by creating communities that are trained, equipped, and ready to protect one another.

José Ngunjiri's actions have strengthened response capacity in high-risk communities. His mentorship model has multiplied impact by developing new local instructors, expanding reach beyond single events. Communities report increased preparedness, faster emergency response, and greater confidence to intervene safely. In 2025, over 250,000 individuals received life-saving education. Kenyatta National Hospital reports a



40% reduction in hospitalizations from burn injuries from Mathare Valley (Nairobi) and directly attributes this reduction to prevention initiatives spearheaded by José. He is replicating his work in Nigeria, Malawi and Zambia. Jose has reduced risk exposure and helped build a sustainable culture of prevention and resilience.

José represents the very best of community leadership - he teaches lifesaving skills and he inspires others to carry them forward. His commitment to preventing avoidable deaths is creating safer, stronger communities long after the training ends.



2.3. Increasing health security in rural Nepal

***Dr. Pradeep Adhikari, Vice President, Community Health and Outreach Program
Head, National Health Action Force Nepal (NHAFN), Nepal***

Dr. Pradeep Adhikari, National Health Action Force Nepal (NHAFN), is an inspirational leader whose vision and action have transformed community health and safety across Nepal. Through his pivotal role at the National Health Action Force Nepal (NHAFN), he has masterfully mobilized communities, innovated frugal health solutions, and built resilient systems from the ground up. He leads and empowers by training local volunteers as first responders and integrating indigenous knowledge with modern practice. Dr. Adhikari stands out for his unwavering commitment to serving the most remote and vulnerable populations, demonstrating that true leadership means creating lasting safety and well-being where it is needed most.

Under Dr. Adhikari's leadership, NHAFN has achieved remarkable, measurable outcomes. His initiatives have established a network of over 500 trained community health volunteers and 12 village emergency response teams. This has led to a significant increase in emergency care access, a documented reduction in critical health incidents, and stronger community cohesion in crisis response. His work has directly protected



lives, safeguarded livelihoods, and built a sustainable model of community-owned health security that continues to expand its reach and impact.

Dr. Adhikari's work is a powerful testament to community-led change. His ability to inspire action, overcome systemic barriers, and deliver scalable solutions under challenging conditions makes him an exemplary candidate for the ADN Hero Award. His legacy with NHAFN is in a movement of health resilience he continues to fuel.