



ANNUAL REPORT 2016 - 2017

From the Trustees

2016-2017 has been another busy year for Soapbox as we continue to expand our partnerships and work together to improve infection prevention in maternity units in low- and middle- income countries.

In the year to March 2017, Soapbox completed the HANDS project in **Zanzibar**, funded by the Medical Research Council and conducted in collaboration with the Zanzibar Ministry of Health and Social Welfare, Pemba Public Health Laboratory, and the University of Aberdeen.

In **Ethiopia**, the partnership with Felege Hiwot Referral Hospital and Bahir Dar University was further strengthened by a series of visits in both directions and by the appointment of a Soapbox-funded audit clerk.

We have continued to work with our partner, The Horizons Trust, in **The Gambia** to improve conditions in five selected health facilities around Banjul. Horizons funded infrastructure improvements and co-facilitated a pilot of training for low-literate domestic services and support staff, based on a training package developed by Soapbox.

A preliminary visit was arranged with Tema General Hospital in **Ghana**, with the aim of setting up a similar partnership to that now established in Ethiopia. In terms of initial steps to building this partnership, two students from the University of Aberdeen visited the hospital to complete their MBChB Elective projects;

this included an audit on the management of maternal sepsis cases.

We were approached by WaterAid and agreed to work together with them in **Myanmar** on a UNICEF-funded project to provide technical advice and input to assess the need for water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH), and infection prevention and control (IPC) in health care facilities. WaterAid has led on the project with the Myanmar Ministry of Health with the aim of building a longer-term programme of improvements.

In **Malawi**, we have also been working with WaterAid as part of their Deliver Life Project, funded by DFID under the UK Aid Match Scheme. Needs assessments of WASH and IPC were conducted in sixteen rural health centres in three Malawian districts. The results of which have been fed back to stakeholders with proposals now in place to develop and implement targeted improvement plans.

At home in the **UK**, we continued to raise the profile of Soapbox by holding a number of public engagement events, and through our communication channels including our website and social media. Soapbox has also published a number of peer-reviewed articles in the last year and these, along with our other material, can be found on our website: www.soapboxcollaborative.org.

Mr Alec Cumming
Trustee

About Soapbox

The Soapbox Collaborative is a charitable trust which focuses on reducing healthcare-associated infections (HCAIs) at birth in low- and middle- income countries. Our work is evidence-based; we undertake research to strengthen understanding of HCAIs and develop effective interventions to support quality improvement of hygiene standards in maternity units. Our vision is a world where all mothers and babies have access to clean safe care – a sensitive marker of quality care. Soapbox has UK bases at the University of Aberdeen and the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine.

Since its inception in 2012, Soapbox has been active in India, Bangladesh, Zanzibar, The Gambia, Zimbabwe, Myanmar, Malawi, and Ethiopia. We work in close partnership with in-country healthcare agencies and research groups, and national and international agencies including WaterAid, NHS Grampian, and the WHO.

Communication and Advocacy

We have been spreading our message through seminars and a series of public and student engagement events. These have included holding stands at this year's May Festival, hosted by the University of Aberdeen, Robert Gordon University's International Day of the Midwife Conference, and NHS Grampian's annual Champions Challenged Conference. We also participated in Celebrate Aberdeen, which brings together organisations to celebrate the third sector in Aberdeen, and in December we hosted our biennial Soapbox Showcase, highlighting the progress and challenges of our work.

Soapbox has also published several peer-reviewed articles in the last year, in addition to contributing towards The Lancet's Maternal Health Series which was launched in September 2016.



Deliver Life Project in Malawi

Soapbox's partnership with WaterAid took a step forward this year through collaboration on the Deliver Life project, funded by the Department for International Development. The goal of the project is to improve access to sustainable water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) in schools, communities and health centres in marginalised areas of Ethiopia, Malawi and Rwanda. Soapbox's role is to provide technical support on the aspects relating to health facilities, with a focus on maternal and newborn health, initially in Malawi.

The first task for Soapbox Research Fellow, Sandra Virgo, was to assist with needs assessments in sixteen rural health centres in Kasungu, Nkhosakota and Machinga districts. The first two weeks of her trip in August and September was spent working with data collectors and collaborators from WaterAid Malawi to adapt and translate questionnaires, checklists and interview questions. The data collectors were trained in a range of methods to collect qualitative data from interviews and quantitative data from checklists and a questionnaire. At each health centre, interviews were conducted with staff in-charge, other healthcare workers, and cleaners, as well as women who had recently delivered at the facility. This led to a rich set of results, comprising findings on infrastructure, equipment and supplies, cleanliness and infection prevention and control (IPC) programmes, and training and supervision.

With this information Soapbox was able to report back on the needs of each health centre and make recommendations on improvements to infrastructure, hygiene and IPC measures. The immediate priority was to provide WaterAid Malawi with an assessment of the condition of infrastructure at three of the facilities so that remedial building work could go ahead before the rainy season started. Further building work will be undertaken at the remaining facilities and programmes and activities designed to address other identified needs. Plans for Year 2 of the Deliver Life project are being developed by WaterAid Malawi to start this process; Soapbox will continue in a support role for the next 2 years.



Improvised handwashing facility at a Malawi health centre where there are no functional sinks next to the latrines.

WaterAid Partnership in Zanzibar

Since 2013 Soapbox has been working in partnership with WaterAid, the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare (MOHSW), and the Pemba Public Health Laboratory (PHL) in Zanzibar. The original aim of the partnership was to assess the quality of healthcare services and state of WASH and IPC in maternity units across Zanzibar. The results of the assessments were shared at a workshop in late 2014. Based on these results, the research team provided support to the Government of Zanzibar to develop an intervention plan to address the issues uncovered. This included planned improvements to the WASH infrastructure in maternity units and developing training materials for health facility staff on WASH.

In 2016, Soapboxer Giorgia Gon travelled to Zanzibar to see how the improvements had taken shape. All nine of the maternity units that previously lacked a functional sink now have large 'trough' sinks with multiple taps. A training package for cleaners had been developed, tailored to the cleaners' needs and literacy levels, taking a very practical, hands-on approach.

To build on these achievements, Soapbox, the MOHSW and PHL, along with the University of Aberdeen, successfully applied to the Medical Research Council for funds to conduct the 'HANDS study'. This would examine the drivers of hand hygiene compliance among birth attendants in maternity units.





Local midwives were trained as investigators to collect data for the HANDS study through observation in 10 high-load maternity units.

Following data collection and detailed data analyses, a two-day workshop was held in March 2017 with participants from the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare, JHPIEGO and WaterAid Tanzania, to name a few. The workshop focused on interpreting the findings of the study and included group discussions about the use of the results to promote good hand hygiene practices. Two focus groups were held with orderlies to discuss the findings; one topic covered was the layout of the maternity ward and changes that could be made to improve workflow, making it easier to practice good hand hygiene.



The workshop also agreed several trial interventions that would be tested to improve hand hygiene compliance. The next stage of the project will be to implement the activities which included introducing hand gel to one of the main referral hospitals, the introduction of delivery kits, and the re-organisation of the maternity unit layout for workflow efficiency.

Ethiopia Partnership & Student Support

Our partnership with Felege Hiwot Referral Hospital (FHRH), Bahir Dar, Ethiopia continues to thrive. Several trips were made to and from Ethiopia over the last year as well as extended periods of stay by Dr Ryan Ellis and Dr Jolene Moore.

Ryan worked in Ethiopia on behalf of Soapbox at FHRH for 7 months from April to November. An important aspect of Ryan's work was supporting FHRH and its focus on quality improvement, with its own Quality Improvement (QI) Department established recently. With Soapbox's guidance and Ryan's input, a cross-department Audit Committee has been formed leading to an extensive audit conducted on neonatal and perinatal mortality. The Audit Committee will further help develop quality audit projects to enable improvements across departments.

The QI Department has continued to expand with more local staff now employed to ensure the continuation of improvement projects across the hospital. Soapbox has assisted this work by funding the employment of an Audit Clerk to support the collection of data.

Ryan spent further time supporting improvements of surgical and critical care services, along with supporting a number of smaller projects.

Jolene has also spent a significant amount of time on the ground cultivating the partnership between the hospital, NHS Grampian, and Soapbox. The Intensive Care Unit is now complete and slowly expanding its capacity and capability, with Soapbox continuing to support these efforts.

A number of Aberdeen students have also been out to Bahir Dar as part of the ongoing partnership, and supported by FHRH Residents. These visits have resulted in the completion of a number of valuable student projects, the results of which have been presented to the hospital staff promoting both quality improvement work and knowledge exchange.



Along with NHS Grampian, we were delighted to host Dr Bazezew, a Medical Resident from FHRH, during his visit to Aberdeen in October.

The aim of the visit was for Dr Bazezew to meet with colleagues at Soapbox, NHS Grampian and the University of Aberdeen to further our on-going partnership to improve quality of care at FHRH. During his time here Dr Bazezew learnt much from his visits to a number of departments, the antenatal clinic, and the obstetrics and gynaecology departments and maternity facilities both at Aberdeen Royal Infirmary and Peterhead.

The visit was a huge success with Dr Bazezew reflecting,

“

I shared an experience that I couldn't get anywhere [else], which I will try to share with my hospital and the university, I'm sure there are things which can be implemented here [in Ethiopia] that can bring significant [improvements to] patient care.

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Cleaner's Training in The Gambia

One of the most striking findings of the needs assessments carried out by Soapbox across our focus countries has been the lack of formal training of maternity unit cleaning staff. This applies despite the key role they play in maintaining a clean and safe environment with few, if any, resources targeted at training low-literate populations in environmental hygiene and infection prevention.



In response, Soapbox has developed a training package in basic environmental hygiene and IPC based on existing national and international guidelines and in collaboration with experts in the field. The training comprises seven modules based around a 'Clean Box' format, with each Clean Box containing all of the

information and resources required to deliver participatory training in that topic.

May 2016 saw the piloting of the package in the Gambia in partnership with Horizons Trust Gambia and the Ministry of Health's IPC Task Group. The IPC Task Group led the adaptation of the manual to fit the local country context and supported a trial of the training in four health facilities.

A 'Training of Trainers' workshop was held for staff including public health officers, nurses and midwives selected from the four facilities. They, in turn, delivered the training to cleaning staff in their facilities. The training included group work, practical demonstrations, use of posters and photographs, and discussion of case studies. The feedback received from both the trainers and trainees was overwhelmingly positive with changes seen in knowledge and practices following training.

One trainer summarised the impact:

"... when we talk to [the cleaning staff participants], they say "Oh, them things that we are doing we think we are doing good, oh actually we are doing bad"... to be frank enough, [they] surprised me because I don't know that they are so much talented... But the time I stood in front of them to teach them, the ideas they bring out and their understanding level is very fast... We are very happy."

Soapbox Showcase 2016

We were delighted to host our biennial 'Showcase' event in December. Colleagues from NHS Grampian and the University of Aberdeen joined us to celebrate our achievements, and our evolving and strengthening partnerships with them and with our overseas partners over the last two years.

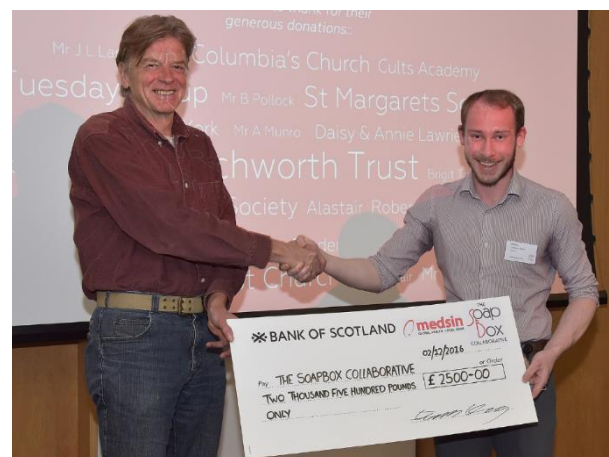


The event was a great success with various speakers on the day sharing their thoughts about Soapbox and the important work we do. The first were Dr Roelf Dijkhuizen and Dr Nick Fluck, former and current Medical Director of NHS Grampian (NHSG) respectively. Dr Dijkhuizen and Dr Fluck discussed our international work and the importance of collaboration, and stressed the benefits that can be gained, not only for our partner countries, but for all involved.

The Showcase saw the presentation of an incredibly generous cheque given to Soapbox for £2500 from Medsin by Global Health Education Coordinator of Medsin Aberdeen, Iain Doig. We were also delighted to award University of Aberdeen medical student, Lucy Singh, our Outstanding Student Achievement Award for all her efforts in supporting Soapbox's research and action priorities over the last two years.

Professor Rona Patey, University of Aberdeen's Director of the Institute of Education for Medical and Dental Sciences, kindly summed up the afternoon and shared some touching words about our work and the impact we are having in many parts of the world.

The energy and enthusiasm surrounding the event was clear evidence of the great work we do and the fantastic support we receive from NHSG, the University, and beyond.



Financial Statement

Income	£
Donations	4,350
Investment income	16,989
Grants	44,512
Total income	65,851
Expenditure	
Project Support	39,684
International travel	1,850
Salaries	174,284
Grants and bursaries	1,255
Other costs	90,773
Total expenditure	307,846
Net expenditure	241,995

Student Projects

Soapbox has continued to support the University of Aberdeen's MBChB & Global Health programme activities. Projects include:

Preventing sepsis: A systematic review of maternal hand hygiene around delivery and in the postpartum period in LMICs. Liz McLeod, MSc Global Health & Management

Investigating the burden of Staphylococcus aureus infection in The Gambia. Samuel Tweed, MBChB Year 5 Elective

An investigation into the potential of implementing a maternal early warning score (MEWS) system at Brikama Hospital, The Gambia. Eilish Carr, MBChB Year 5 Elective

Post-caesarean section surgical site infections: a retrospective audit and case-note review at an Ethiopian referral hospital. Anna Rose, MBChB Year 5 Elective

Management of Maternal Sepsis at Tema Hospital, Ghana. Amy Howell, MBChB Year 5 Elective

An Audit of Maternal Sepsis and its Management at Felege Hiwot Referral Hospital, Bahir Dar. Eilidh Duncan (Year 4 MBChB student), 2016 Summer Project

An Exploratory Audit of Bed Occupancy at Felege Hiwot Referral Hospital. Lucy Singh (Year 3) & Sam Tweed (Year 4 MBChB student), 2016 Summer Project

Our Partners & Stakeholders



Kadoma City Council,
Zimbabwe



Felege Hiwot Referral Hospital
Ethiopia



Scotland's International
Development Alliance



Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia
Ministry of Health



Ministry of Health,
Zanzibar



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