



ANNUAL REPORT 2017 - 2018

From the Trustees

2017-2018 has been another busy year for Soapbox as we continue to work collaboratively with partners to reduce the threat of healthcare associated infections for mothers and their newborns in low- and middle- income countries.

Our partnership with Felege Hiwot Referral Hospital and Bahir Dar University in **Ethiopia** continued to grow as we supported University of Aberdeen medical students through their Elective placements.

With the support of Horizons Trust **Gambia** and the Gambian Ministry of Health, Soapbox piloted illustrated cleaning guidelines developed for training and reference by health facility cleaning staff with limited literacy skills – representing a huge step towards the ultimate aim of developing universally applicable cleaning guidelines that are accessible to all.

In **Myanmar**, we continue to work with WaterAid and country partners to build on the UNICEF-funded programme to improve the quality of maternity care by strengthening health systems.

Work also continued in **Malawi** through the WaterAid Deliver Life project, funded by DFID, following the completion and analysis of needs assessment data.

In **Zanzibar**, Soapbox continued to support candidate interventions developed as a result of the work of the HANDS

project. This has included introducing hand gel to improve hand hygiene compliance.

Our partnerships with key stakeholders, **visibility and influence** continued to grow as Soapbox were invited to present at the WHO/UNICEF WASH in Healthcare Facilities Global Learning Event in Nepal and subsequent discussion panels, leading to the development of core '**cleaning indicators**' for the delivery room.

In 2017, in consultation with the Soapbox Scientific Advisory Group, the **Soapbox 2018-2022 Strategic Plan** was developed. The plan builds on Soapbox's previous five years of work on clean safe birth and sets out our strategy for the next five years.

At home in the **UK**, we continued to generate support through conference and workshop attendance and through hosting a number of public engagement events including a 'PechaKucha' evening in Aberdeen for International Day of the Midwife. We published further peer-reviewed articles in this period and continue to engage with our audience through our website and social media. For further information and to access our other material, go to: www.soapboxcollabortive.org.

Mr Alec Cumming
Trustee

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About Soapbox

The Soapbox Collaborative is a charitable trust which focuses on reducing healthcare-associated infections (HAIs) at birth in low- and middle- income countries. Our work is evidence-based; we undertake research to strengthen understanding of HAIs 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 World Health Organisation.

Communication and Advocacy

In 2017-2018, Soapbox reinvigorated our vision by the review of our Strategic Plan (see page 12). Our message reached many corners of the globe, including our attendance at the WHO/UNICEF Global Learning event in Nepal where we presented on our cleaners training package as it continues to be developed.

In January, our advocacy even reached Bill Gates when we were offered the opportunity to talk about our work in Ethiopia (see page 10). Our other events include the Students for Global Health Conference (see page 13), the University of North Carolina Water and Health Conference, and the Infection Prevention Society Conference.



Celebrating #Blue4Water for World Water Day on March 22nd



Supporting Safe Births in Myanmar

Over the past year, Soapbox have assisted with a UNICEF-funded, WaterAid-led, Water Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) in Healthcare Facilities programme to improve maternity services in Myanmar.

Working with the Government of Myanmar and key stakeholders to assess the need for WASH in healthcare facilities, the main aim of this project was to address current gaps in information on infection prevention and control (IPC) and good hygiene practices, generating a longer-term programme of improvements.

At the start of June, Dr Sandra Virgo of Soapbox's London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine team, flew to Yangon in Myanmar. Her visit included assisting with preparation for a needs assessment of 30 health facilities and a training workshop led by WaterAid. Soapbox continue to assist with the development of the needs assessment methodology and tools and training materials for local health professionals to undertake the data gathering and, finally, contribute to the recommendations for enhancements.

Soapbox also provide technical advice in our specialist areas of environmental hygiene, IPC, maternal and newborn care practices.

This work has continued into a new project, 'Supporting Safe Births in Myanmar'. This project is funded by the Australian Government's flagship program 'Water for Women' which aims to improve health, gender equality and well-being of Asian and Pacific communities through inclusive, sustainable WASH.

The project seeks to improve the quality and safety of healthcare at the time of birth. Focusing on hygiene and cleanliness, Soapbox will support the design of the Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) process that will identify and prioritise WASH-related needs, and support monitoring and evaluation.



Environmental Cleaning and IPC in Healthcare Facilities

Cleaning Indicators

This year the WHO/UNICEF WASH in Healthcare Facilities Monitoring Task Team has been in the process of developing a set of ‘core’ survey indicators for water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) in the delivery room. The first draft of the indicators was discussed at a meeting in Geneva in July 2017. During the meeting it was recognised that, along with the first four indicators on basic water supply, sanitation, hygiene provisions, and waste management, it was also critical to capture information on environmental cleanliness. Given Soapbox’s focus on both maternal health and environmental cleanliness and our background in needs assessment/survey development, we offered to develop a fifth core indicator in this area and partnered with WaterAid to do so.

Later in the year, Soapbox’s Chief Scientific Adviser, Prof Wendy Graham, attended the two-day meeting with a number of other experts in the field of WASH, maternal health and infection prevention and control. The meeting concentrated on a core list of indicators, along with questions/activities to construct them. As well as the core lists, there was also the intention to develop an expanded set of indicators where more data is wanted and can be realistically captured. Following the meeting, we have now gone through several cycles of review and revision

which has strengthened the indicators and we are confident they will combine to produce an important snapshot of WASH in the delivery room.

Global Learning Event in Nepal



Soapbox’s Senior Programmes Officer Suzanne Cross, attended the WASH in Healthcare Facilities (HCFs) Global Learning Event (GLE) hosted by WHO and UNICEF. The GLE focused on ‘action’ and provided an opportunity for participants, at all levels, to share experiences and solutions and jointly problem-solve barriers to WASH in HCFs.

Soapbox presented on the pilot of the cleaners training package which took place in the Gambia last year. There was a great deal of interest in the training and it was positive to see so many stakeholders recognize the important role cleaners have to play in infection prevention to ensure healthcare environments are clean and safe.

Illustrated Guidelines

Cleaning procedure guidelines form an essential part of any health facility to provide a 'gold standard' to work to and ensure that tasks are carried out in the most efficient, effective and safe way possible. While the cleaning guidelines were a welcome addition to the maternity units in the Gambia, they relied upon literate staff to read through and demonstrate each task to the cleaning staff whose often poor literacy skills meant that the text-based guidelines were less accessible to them and of limited use as a reference document. In response to this, we worked with a local graphic artist, Kieren McDonald, to illustrate the guidelines and provide an accessible reference manual for staff with limited literacy skills.

Field-testing in the Gambia of the illustrated guidelines' suitability received positive feedback. One piece of feedback included the cleaning staff requesting the guidelines in a poster format to be displayed in appropriate areas, considering that this visual aid would prompt good practice and act as a daily reminder.

The next stages and the ultimate aim of the project is to develop universally applicable guidelines while addressing the challenge of ensuring they are adaptable to local variations in practice and resources, while maintaining best practice.



Ethiopia Partnership

Over the last three years, The Soapbox Collaborative and NHS Grampian have partnered with Felege Hiwot Referral Hospital (FHRH) and Bahir Dar University to work towards improving quality care and infection prevention and control. We have developed the partnership in many ways including supporting the development of audit and research capabilities within FHRH, to carrying out needs assessments and bilateral sharing of clinical and managerial skills.

In November, the partnership was nominated at the Health Service Journal Awards, an honourable accolade in British healthcare and the largest awards programme of its type in the world. While we missed the prize on the night, we were delighted to have been nominated alongside several prestigious contenders.



Earlier in the year, Dr Jolene Moore spent time at FHRH and Bahir Dar University developing training around anaesthesia practice. In May, Jolene who has worked extensively with Soapbox and NHS Grampian to develop the partnership, was appointed as Assistant Professor of Anaesthesiology at Bahir Dar University.

The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation

In January 2018, alongside the First Minister Nicola Sturgeon and Chief Medical Officer Dr Catherine Calderwood, NHS Grampian's Director of Acute Services Gary Mortimer was invited to Edinburgh to meet Mr Bill Gates and representatives of the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation.

The meeting was an opportunity to discuss the work he and his team carried out when they visited FHRH to share skills and train maintenance staff. The visit resulted in significant improvements to the availability of running water, and increased handwashing facilities in the maternity unit.

The meeting was a fantastic opportunity to share the successes of the partnership with important stakeholders, and to hear from others working to promote global citizenship.

Pictured left: Gary Mortimer (NHS Grampian), Wendy Graham (Soapbox) and Dr Siyoum Enkubahiri (FHRH) at the HSJ Awards Ceremony

Visit by Jennie Spence

In February, NHS Grampian's Jennie Spence spent some time with the healthcare team who work in an Intensive Care Unit (ICU) at FHRH. She reported,

'From the moment I landed in Bahir Dar, I was made to feel very welcome. The team's clinical examination and procedural skills were impressive and I learned a lot from their informative ward rounds. I was soon questioning my own practice, wondering if, in the UK, we sometimes overdid the number of tests and paperwork – did such things really benefit patient care? Aspects such as this definitely gave me a lot to think about.'

It did not take long to start to understand some of the challenges the staff faced. The issue of limits to healthcare funding was familiar, but here it was on a magnified scale. The nurses and doctors were resilient. I could see that they knew what was 'best practice' but had learnt to compromise so that they could continue to provide care even when the most basic of resources such as water and electricity were not available. I was also impressed by their ingenuity – I had never seen so many different uses for a simple intravenous fluid infusion set. This equipment was skillfully turned into everything from suction catheters, to curtain ties to chest drain tubing, however, but I'm not sure this would go down well if I started to do this in Aberdeen!'



Pictured: Clinical bed at FHRH, hospital campus and front gate, Jennie Spence and FHRH colleagues

Malawi

Over the last two years, Soapbox has collaborated with WaterAid UK and WaterAid Malawi on the Deliver Life Project. Funded by the Department for International Development under the UK Aid Match Scheme, the project aims to improve access to, and use of, sustainable water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) services in schools, communities and health facilities in the marginalised districts of Kasungu, Nkhotakota, and Machinga in Malawi.

Soapbox has provided technical support on aspects relating to health facilities, with a focus on maternity care. Soapbox Research Fellow, Dr Sandra Virgo, has visited Malawi several times over the course of the project and has assisted with the implementation and analysis of needs assessments in sixteen rural health facilities, generating recommendations on improvements to infrastructure, hygiene and IPC measures.

Soapbox's role in the project is now complete and we wish our partners every success for the final project year.

Soapbox Strategic Plan

During 2017, in consultation with advisers – both internal and external to Soapbox – the Soapbox 2018-2022 Strategic Plan was developed.

The plan builds on five years of prior work on clean safe birth with international, national and local partners and sets out a

strategy, for the next five years, for playing our specific role in preventing healthcare-associated infections and the deaths of mothers and newborns.

October saw the team come together at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine to review the draft plan and activity areas and begin the process of creating an accompanying operational guide.

Not only did the meeting provide an opportunity to work together on the plan, it also provided an opportunity to introduce and welcome Emma Morrison as the new Operational Manager. Emma has been with Soapbox since January 2016 in her previous role as Scientific Project Officer.

The meeting was a great success and a chance for (almost) the whole team to spend some time together, a rare but fun occurrence!



Pictured: Emma, Susannah, Suzanne, Katherine, Wendy, Giorgia, & Sandra

Student Outreach

In November, Soapbox were invited to a talk with the University of Aberdeen Obstetrics and Gynaecology (O&G) Society. Professor Wendy Graham (Chief Scientific Adviser) presented an intriguing talk titled: ‘Leaving No One Behind: Clean Birth for Every Mother & Newborn’. Students were walked through the changing demographics of childbirth, and the “perfect storm” of factors that are contributing to maternal and neonatal infections, including increases in institutional birth rates in unprepared facilities, increasing antimicrobial resistance and poor sanitation and hygiene linked to poor training and inadequate water supplies.

Lucy Singh (Soapbox Ambassador) provided an overview of Soapbox’s activities and her previous work with Soapbox on overcrowding in maternity facilities. In addition, the society raised funds towards Soapbox’s ‘Clean Boxes’ which provide all the materials and resources needed for training maternity unit cleaning staff in IPC and environmental hygiene. Many thanks to the O&G Society for providing this opportunity to further our engagement with students.

February saw Soapbox attend the Students for Global Health (SfGH) National Conference, ‘Drugs: Our Daily Med’. Students from 18 universities across the UK and beyond attended the

conference, which delivered a varied programme and fantastic speakers.

Soapbox ran a workshop, “Where there is no water” where we discussed the contexts in which we work and the importance of having an understanding of these complex environments in order to improve quality of care. The session provided an opportunity for students to hear first-hand about the barriers and facilitators to working in low-income health facility settings and the importance of needs assessments to inform quality improvement.

Prof Graham (pictured) then presented her talk “Too much, too late, too little, too soon”. The talk discussed inequalities across and within high- and low- income countries and the push for institutional deliveries in facilities that do not have the capacity to provide quality care. Soapbox were delighted to be part of such a great event and is grateful to SfGH Aberdeen for all their hard work in making the event a successful weekend.



Financial Statement

| Income | £ |
|--------------------------|----------------|
| Donations | 100,162 |
| Investment income | 10,549 |
| Grants | 31,896 |
| Total income | 142,607 |
| Expenditure | |
| Project Support | 24,524 |
| International travel | 3,496 |
| Salaries | 140,977 |
| Grants and bursaries | - |
| Other costs | 143,427 |
| Total expenditure | 312,424 |
| Net expenditure | 169,817 |

Student Projects

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

- **A cross sectional analysis of antenatal care in Bundung Maternal and Child Health Hospital, The Gambia.** Tianna Salmeron, MBChB Year 5 Elective
- **Kangaroo Mother Care, The Gambia.** Aidan Matthews, MBChB Year 5 Elective
- **Antimicrobial Stewardship Programmes in South-East Asia Region.** Nadytia Kusumadjayanti, MSc Global Health & Management
- **Communities of Practice Knowledge Summary.** Timur Valiev, MSc Global Health & Management
- **How Crowded is Overcrowded: Defining & Measuring Overcrowding on Maternity Wards in LMICs.** Victoria Kinkaid, MSc Global Health & Management

Publications

- **Unpacking the enabling factors for hand, cord and birth-surface hygiene in Zanzibar maternity units.** Giorgia Gon. Health Policy and Planning. Oct 2017.
- **Who delivers where? The effect of obstetric risk on facility delivery in East Africa.** Sandra Virgo. Tropical Medicine & International Health. Jun 2017.
- **Cesarean section wound infections and antibiotic use: a retrospective case-series in a tertiary referral hospital in the Gambia.** Alex Aulakh. Tropical Doctor. Nov 2017.

Our Partners & Stakeholders



Felege Hiwot Referral Hospital
Ethiopia



Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia
Ministry of Health



Kadoma City Council,
Zimbabwe



Pemba Island - Zanzibar



Ministry of Health,
Zanzibar



Sanitation and Hygiene Applied Research for Equity





Saving lives with clean safe care at birth

www.soapboxcollaborative.org

e: info@soapboxcollaborative.org | t: 01224 438393



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