

*Saving lives
with clean safe
care at birth*

Soap Matters

December 2017

Issue 17

Ensuring Relevance

A message from Soapbox Chief Scientific Adviser, Professor Wendy Graham, as we look back on 2017:

The Soapbox Collaborative was launched in March 2012 in response to an acknowledged gap in evidence and action to ensure clean, safe birth for women and newborns in low-income countries.



2010 Gates Foundation, Courtesy of Flickr

Our vision and activities to help fill this gap were focused essentially on the immediate term as we hoped and expected many other actors to contribute. We envisaged our role would be time-limited, and that our commitment to local, sustainable solutions would eventually lead to our “successful redundancy”. Five years on, it is certainly

the case that the community of actors addressing clean birth has naturally increased and we are delighted to be working in close partnership with many of them.

We have not, however, become redundant – as seen in the requests we receive to join with others, and indeed new challenges have emerged in maternity units which impact on safety and well-being during childbirth, such as increasing antimicrobial resistance, rising caesarean section rates, and a changing risk profile among some women presenting for delivery.

In 2017, The Soapbox Collaborative has taken stock of its contribution during the first five years and the potential for a continuing, relevant and appropriate role, particularly given the emerging challenges. This strategic review process has involved both internal and external consultation, and has reached a firm conclusion – Soapbox must continue, must focus on relevant priorities, and must work collaboratively.

Early in 2018 we will make public our new Strategic Plan for the next five years and we warmly invite you to “watch this space for more”!



2000 Liz Gilbert, Courtesy of Photoshare

Recent Publications

Aulakh, A. *et al.* (2017) Caesarean section wound infections and antibiotic use: a retrospective case-series in a tertiary referral hospital in The Gambia. *Tropical Doctor* [online]. 6 November.

Gon, G. *et al.* (2017) Unpacking the enabling factors for hand, cord and birth-surface hygiene in Zanzibar maternity units. *Health, Policy and Planning*. Volume 32, Issue 8, 1 October, Pages 1220–1228.

The Latest on WASH Indicators

Soapbox was invited to attend a meeting in Geneva at the end of July on the development of indicators focusing on the state of water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) in the delivery room. The meeting took place as part of the WHO/UNICEF Joint Monitoring Programme WASH in Healthcare Facilities (HCFs) work.

The meeting was attended by a number of experts from the WASH in HCFs Monitoring Task Team covering the fields of WASH, maternal health, and infection prevention and control. 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 evidence 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.

The indicators were developed in partnership with WaterAid and in October, we joined a webinar to share updates of this work and discuss next steps. An overview of each of the indicators for the delivery room was provided, with Soapbox presenting on the environmental cleaning indicators. A discussion followed around the indicators, their focus and wording, and methodological issues. Updates were provided on current monitoring activities and opportunities to pilot the delivery room indicators from other members of the Task Team, representing a range of organisations, NGOs and academic

institutions. Next steps involve finalising the indicators based on the Task Team’s feedback and revising them for application in the health facility general service area.

We were delighted to have been able to contribute to such important work on developing global indicators to monitor basic standards and look forward to continuing to work together with the rest of the Task Team on their development.



2015 World Health Organisation

Soapbox at the HSJ Awards



2017 The Soapbox Collaborative
Professor Wendy Graham (Soapbox), Dr Siyoum Enkubahiri (Felege Hiwot Referral Hospital, Ethiopia), Dr Jolene Moore (NHS Grampian)

Soapbox alongside NHS Grampian were delighted to have been nominated for the Health Service Journal (HSJ) Awards held on 22nd November at the Intercontinental O2 in London. The HSJ Awards have recognised some of the most impressive achievements in the NHS over the last 36 years, becoming an honourable accolade in British healthcare and the largest awards programme of its type in the world.

Nominated for the International Health Partnership Award, NHS Grampian and Soapbox have worked with Felege Hiwot Referral Hospital (FHRH) and Bahir Dar University towards improving quality care and infection prevention and control. We have developed the partnership in many ways from supporting the development of audit and research capabilities within FHRH, to carrying out needs assessments and bilateral sharing of clinical and managerial skills.

While we missed the prize on the night, we were delighted to have been nominated alongside several prestigious contenders and would like to pass on our congratulations to the winners The Butabika - East London Link, along with our fellow nominees.



2017 The Soapbox Collaborative
Gary Mortimer (NHS Grampian), Wendy &, Siyoum

Where Science Meets Policy

Soapboxer Sandra Virgo reports on her recent trip to North Carolina...

From 16th – 20th October I attended the conference, *Water & Health: Where Science Meets Policy*, at the University of North Carolina (UNC). As Soapbox is based on a fusion of research and action, this was right up our street, and we had been invited to appear at two side events.

North Carolina is the site of the “Research Triangle”, an area between the cities of Raleigh, Durham and Chapel Hill where several universities and hi-tech companies sit. From the airport, our cab driver managed to drop a fellow conference-goer and me at the wrong hotel. However, the hotel manager (one Amelia Shaw) generously offered to give us a lift to the right hotel “as I live just up the road”.



2017 The Soapbox Collaborative

The next morning at the conference I presented at an event convened by Save the Children entitled *WaSH for Maternal & Neonatal Health: Behaviors, Birth Kits, and Indicators*. I described the work done by fellow

Soapboxers Giorgia Gon and Susannah Woodd on the feasibility of using pre-prepared birth kits in labour wards to improve hygiene and workflow. It was good to network afterwards with others doing related work.



2014 Alex Aufsh
Clean Birth Kits containing eg. sterile gloves, a sterile blade, and a cord tie

As the conference proceeded, we were incessantly given vast amounts of food. I also befriended an Indian sanitation researcher at the hotel who like me, thanks to jetlag, could only sleep from 7pm-2am. During the days there were many interesting talks, particularly those on behaviour change interventions, and on climate change and WaSH.

On Thursday I was then a “special guest” at another side event, this time organised by Emory University: *Moving WaSH in Healthcare Facilities from Assessment to Action: What are the Solutions?* A packed schedule meant there was just time to slip in a few words on the importance of Continuous Quality Improvement in facilities. The next morning, after a quick walk around the leafy UNC campus, it was time to catch a flight home, but not without having made many valuable WaSH contacts with whom Soapbox will be staying in touch.

Strategic Plan Meeting & Review

As Professor Graham noted in her opening words for the newsletter, over the last year and in consultation with advisors – both internal and external to Soapbox – we have taken stock of our progress to date and the Soapbox 2018-2022 Strategic Plan has been 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 to be published early 2018.

Not only did the meeting provide an

opportunity to work together on the plan, but also an opportunity to introduce and welcome Emma Morrison as our new Operations Manager. Emma has been with Soapbox since January 2016 in her previous role as Scientific Project Officer.



2017 The Soapbox Collaborative
Soapbox's Aberdeen & London teams together!