

*Saving lives
with clean safe
care at birth*

Soap Matters

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Issue 18

The CLEAN Study

Through our work in low and middle-income countries Soapbox has developed a longstanding interest in the essential role of health facility cleaning staff and the part they play in reducing the threat to mothers and newborns from healthcare-associated infections (HCAI). Cleaners are the interface between water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) and infection prevention and control (IPC) and yet, despite this, often remain comparatively neglected within facilities – untrained and with no real knowledge of IPC.

© 2016 Soapbox Collaborative - Piloting of participatory training package in the Gambia



We are therefore delighted to announce that we will be working with partners on the newly funded 'CLEAN Study' which will investigate whether training 'Cleaning Champions', to educate hospital cleaners in best practice

methods, improves environmental hygiene in maternity and newborn units in three Tanzanian hospitals.

The multi-disciplinary partnership composed of researchers from the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine (LSHTM), NHS Lanarkshire, Ifakara Health Institute (IHI) and The Soapbox Collaborative, will be led by Dr Alexander Aiken. The study will begin by identifying staff in each hospital who will become local Cleaning Champions through training and mentorship. Soapbox's participatory training package will be adapted to the local context and used to support learning. The 'Cleaning Champions' in turn will educate and supervise existing cleaners of maternity and newborn units employing standard quality improvement tools. Assessments before and after training will measure changes in knowledge, beliefs, skills and behaviour of Cleaning Champions and cleaners.

It is hoped that lessons learnt from this study will help inform a larger trial which will assess the intervention's effectiveness in relation to environmental hygiene on maternity and newborn units in Tanzania and the prevalence of HCAI in mothers and newborns.



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Soapbox Office Move

Last month saw big changes for the Aberdeen Soapbox team as we packed up and moved to our new offices in the west wing of the Polwarth building of the University of Aberdeen.

This is an ideal location for continuing to build our connections with the University, and with our many associates at NHS Grampian.

Moving day involved lots of boxes, lots of packing and lots of unpacking, but we are happy to say we're all settled in- see Emma and Suzanne's new home above!

Our new address is:

1.127 Polwarth Building, c/o University of Aberdeen, Foresterhill, Aberdeen, AB25 2ZD

MSc Students Join Soapbox

Soapbox is delighted to have been working with three University of Aberdeen MSc Global Health and Management students over the past few months as they completed their work-based placements (WBP) with us. The WBP provides the opportunity for students to work with health and development organisations in the UK and overseas. Through the placements, students gain a unique experience, make valuable connections within their area of choice, and develop transferable skills as well as CV-enhancing experience.

Over the ten week placements, our

students have been working on projects focused on antimicrobial stewardship, overcrowding and bed management in low-income country maternity units, and 'Communities of Practice' (CoP) which are groups of people who engage in a process of common learning.

Timur shared a little about his experience reviewing CoPs;

'In my view, work in the prevention field of healthcare is most promising. However, to promote it, cooperation between professionals is crucial. Even in the first weeks I began to understand the importance and meaning of CoPs more.

This placement has offered the possibility to master skills in conducting policy and literature reviews with deep analysis, which is very key.' We look forward to seeing their reports and learning more about the students' findings.



© 2018 Soapbox Collaborative—Timur, Nadytia, & Victoria

Supporting Safe Birth



Over the past year, Soapbox have assisted with a UNICEF-funded WaterAid-led, Water Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) in health care 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.

A report on findings will be published later this year but in the meantime, we are thrilled to announce that we will continue to work with WaterAid and country partners in Myanmar to build on this programme to improve the quality of maternal healthcare by strengthening health systems.

The new project 'Supporting Safe Births in Myanmar' 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 a Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) process that will identify and prioritise WASH-related needs, and support monitoring and evaluation.

In addition to WaterAid, partners on this project include Jhpiego, the Government of Myanmar's Department of Medical Services, the Department of Public Health, the Department of Medical Research and Myanmar Women's Affairs Federation. We look forward to sharing progress as the project evolves.

Experiences of Ethiopia: Jennie Spence

Jennie Spence, Nurse Practitioner at NHS Grampian reports about her recent visit to Felege Hiwot Referral Hospital in Ethiopia...

In conjunction with Soapbox and NHS Grampian, I was lucky enough to spend some time in an Intensive Care Unit (ICU) in Felege Hiwot Hospital. Normally I think of intensive care as an expensive care setting, with increased staffing ratios and lots of high-tech equipment. I was curious to learn more about how to provide critical care in a more resource-limited setting.



From the moment I landed in Bahir Dar, I was made to feel very welcome. The healthcare team shared their friendship, their coffee and their experiences with me, even though it felt that all that I did in return was supply a seemingly never-ending torrent of questions- "What is that for?", "Why is that happening?".

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? 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 skilfully turned into everything from suction catheters, to curtain ties to chest drain tubing. I'm not sure this would go down well if I started to do this in Aberdeen!

It did not take long to start to understand some of the challenges the staff faced. 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. They shared their frustrations with me and were almost in disbelief when they asked me to describe our 'free-to-all' national health service.

Since being back, I definitely look at things differently. I understand that the Scottish healthcare system is not perfect but I appreciate what we do have and the importance of its sustainability. I understand better the importance of practising efficiently and encouraging others to do the same. I am sure there are many ways both patients and staff can benefit, both here and in Ethiopia.

World Water Day

Soapbox celebrated World Water Day on the 22nd March by going #Blue4Water to focus attention on the importance of access to clean, safe water for infection prevention. Infection and sepsis are leading causes of maternal and newborn mortality estimated to cause 430,000 newborn deaths globally every year. Contributing to this crisis faced by many is the lack of access to water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) in health facilities where women go to deliver.

A report by the World Health Organisation and UNICEF identified that 38% of health care facilities in low- and middle-income countries do not have access to an improved water source, that is, a water source which is protected from outside contamination, while 35% of health facilities lack water and soap for handwashing, a basic necessity for preventing infections.

Realising improvements in WASH in healthcare facilities is critical for infection

prevention and requires commitment from partners at every level; local, national, and global. Soapbox work collaboratively with partners such as WaterAid, WHO, local non-governmental organisations and Ministries of Health to ensure improvements are made and sustained. Days like World Water Day help to draw attention to the importance of water and cast a light on the inadequate conditions caused by lack of WASH in health facilities. Global action must be taken to ensure no more lives are lost due to lack of water and its consequences.

