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Quick Facts

Newborns in low income countries have up to 20 times higher risk of acquiring a health care-associated infection than babies born in high-income countries¹

Right handed people tend to wash their left hand more thoroughly than their right hand, and vice versa!²

In Europe, annual financial losses due to health care-associated infections (HCAIs) are estimated at approximately 7 billion Euros, reflecting 16 million extra days of hospital stay and 37,000 deaths attributable to HCAIs.³



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COLLABORATIVE ... Saving a million lives with clean safe care at birth

Soap Matters

Issue Two

June 2013

Welcome to the second edition of *Soap Matters*.

Since our first edition back in March, the *Soapbox Collaborative* has been very busy indeed! We helped to host an exclusive screening of the acclaimed film *SISTER*; participated in several seminars; held discussions with potential partners regarding funding, training, resource development and capacity building; and contributed to a number of events at which the vision, mission and early work of *Soapbox* has featured prominently.

The activities undertaken in the past three months have focused around the two 'arms' of *Soapbox*: Soapbox Action and Soapbox Know-how.

Soapbox Action focuses on improving the practices of healthcare workers and raising standards in healthcare environments. It refers to work with partners who are active in countries with high maternal and newborn mortality rates, particularly those in sub-Saharan Africa and South-east Asia.

We collaborate to identify healthcare settings in need of quality improvement. Based on local assessments, *Soapbox* supports a wide range of activities, including the refurbishment labour wards, providing clean instruments, and addressing shortfalls in equipment and supplies. Crucially, we also support training of health workers and ward cleaners to encourage improved hygiene practices.

Soapbox Know-how focuses on strengthening understanding of the benefits of clean safe birth and the risks to mothers and babies of healthcare-associated infections. Soapbox Know-how aims to strengthen the knowledge base through research studies to improve the understanding of infection prevention and control and to advocate for clean safe care at birth. We do this by working with partners to explore the behavioural, technological and health systems challenges of delivering clean care at birth and to monitor, evaluate and promote effective interventions.

Read on to learn more about the work of *Soapbox*!



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The Origins of Soapbox

Miss Elsie Duguid, retired nurse and midwife, is the primary benefactor of the Soapbox Collaborative. Born into a farming family on the outskirts of Aberdeen, Miss Duguid qualified in her chosen profession of nursing in 1943 after three years of training at Aberdeen Royal Infirmary (ARI). Miss Duguid then went on to complete her midwifery training at Aberdeen Maternity Hospital and in 1947 returned to general nursing to become ward sister of the professorial surgical unit in the ARI. Here she learnt first hand the crucial importance of asepsis and good hygiene practices for infection prevention and control. Miss Duguid developed her career further by training as a Public Health Nurse, qualifying in 1960, and continued to serve the community of Aberdeen until she retired in 1981. Miss Duguid remains active in her local church group and maintains a lively interest in current affairs. Her experience as a midwife in Scotland combined with her generosity have now helped to create the Soapbox Collaborative - to extend the benefits of clean safe birth to women and babies in the poorest parts of the world.



© Elsie Duguid

WASH & CLEAN on the Labour Ward - Soapbox joins a successful bid for research funds

The relationship between the Millennium Development Goals for improved maternal health, newborn and child health and for improved water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) (MDGs 5, 4 and 7 respectively) in low and middle income countries has largely been neglected until recently. Furthermore, what work has been conducted has generally focused on household and community levels rather than health care institutions.

When SHARE (Sanitation and Hygiene Applied Research for Equity)

and the Water Supply and Sanitation Collaborative Council (WSSCC) announced their Request for Proposals for research on sanitation and women in India, it provided an excellent opportunity for *Soapbox* to work with partners and respond.

The proposal, submitted in collaboration with the Public Health Foundation of India - Gujarat, the Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee, and the University of Aberdeen, outlined plans to conduct a situation analysis of the determinants, processes and effectiveness of cleaning practices on labour wards in India. The equivalent study in Bangladesh is being funded exclusively by *Soapbox* and will allow for the evaluation of findings across contexts.

The project involves the development and use of a number of novel methods for capturing evidence on cleanliness and the relationship to WASH conditions in health facilities. These methods include the use of participatory photography, simple microbiology 'swab and grow' methods to determine levels of cleanliness, and the involvement of cleaners in the capture of visual evidence.

We were delighted to learn that the funding application was successful. Work will begin this month and will run until June 2014.



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SISTER

A FILM BY BRENDA DAVIS
AN INTIMATE PORTRAIT OF A GLOBAL CRISIS



An estimated 150 people attended the exclusive screening of the powerful, groundbreaking documentary *Sister* on March 1st in Aberdeen. The screening was co-hosted by Soapbox,

Take One Action, Immpact, and the Centre for Sustainable International Development (CSID). The film was preceded by a panel discussion, chaired by Simon Bateson from Take One Action, on progress towards achieving the target of Millennium Development Goal 5 (reducing maternal mortality by 75% by 2015), the role of the Scottish Government and Scottish-based charities, and how the general public should be engaged in addressing the issues raised.

Panel members included the Minister for External Affairs and International Development, Mr Humza Yousaf MSP, Dame Anne Begg MP, Ann Gloag from the Gloag Foundation, Professor Wendy Graham (Soapbox co-founder), and Dr. Hilary Homans, Director of CSID.

The film followed the work of four health workers in Cambodia, Haiti and Ethiopia in trying to save the lives of mothers and babies during childbirth. Following the film, attendees described it as "inspiring", "thought-provoking", "touching" and "remarkable".

Keep it Clean Aberdeen!

The Soapbox team were on hand recently at the University of Aberdeen's May Festival to meet with members of the public in a bid to show how thorough hand-washing can prevent infections.



© University of Aberdeen 2013

A team of volunteers from the Aberdeen Fungal Group posing as "germ busters" (shown opposite with Professor Wendy Graham) attracted visitors to the "Keep it Clean Aberdeen" stand. The stand featured practical hand-washing demonstrations, free soap samples, and poster displays (seen below & available on the Soapbox website) showcasing Aberdeen's amazing contribution to improving public health and hygiene from the 1700s to the modern day.

Visitors took a keen interest in the display and enjoyed hearing how Soapbox is building on the successes of past work such as that of Dr Alexander Gordon who identified the importance of hand hygiene at the time of childbirth in preventing infections back in 1795. The stand proved popular with parents and children alike who queued for much of the weekend to see how well they were washing their hands using a UV light-box and glitter bug lotion to help visualise the germs!

"The Keep it Clean Aberdeen" event was organised by Dr Donna MacCallum from the Institute of Medical Sciences and Professor Wendy Graham from the School of Medicine & Dentistry and the Soapbox Collaborative.



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Completion of the first Soapbox funded project - Rimuka Maternity Home Update

In our first newsletter we reported on the Soapbox funded work being conducted at the Rimuka Maternity Home in Kadoma, Zimbabwe, in collaboration with the Zimbabwe Network for Health (ZimHealth).

Following their successful application to Soapbox, the Maternity Home was able to purchase essential items for effective infection prevention and control and for safe delivery. Items included an autoclave (used to sterilise equipment), a baby resuscitator, instrument trolleys, a portable haemoglobin meter, and non-medical items such as a stove and floor polisher.

A further application for funds was then approved by Soapbox to support training on infection control. Ninety-one health care workers from the district (midwives, doctors, environmental health technicians, ambulance drivers, nurse aides) were updated on infection control practices and procedures. An evaluation of the training is currently underway.



© ZimHealth 2013

Alongside the support from Soapbox, the Kadoma City Council simultaneously funded renovation work in the Maternity Home to upgrade the floors, install a borehole and replace a water tank, build a brick incinerator, and develop plans to renovate the laboratory and construct a new waste disposal unit.

As the first funded project, Soapbox is delighted to have collaborated with ZimHealth and the Kadoma City Council to enable this vital upgrading of the Rimuka Maternity Home. The new equipment and infection control training, combined with facility renovations, will no doubt translate into significant health gains not only for mothers and babies but also the wider patient base and health care workforce.