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# Soap Matters

Issue Three

September 2013

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

## Welcome to our third edition of Soap Matters,

the quarterly newsletter from the Soapbox Collaborative. This quarter has been full of activity. In June, we co-hosted with Horizons Trust Gambia, the launch of an exciting new training & leadership programme in The Gambia called the "Maternal Cleanliness Champions Initiative", or MCCI for short. In July, a workshop was held for partners involved in the "WASH and CLEAN" research project. This workshop included training in an approach called Participatory Photography. This is a method commonly used to engage marginalised groups, and we have adapted to use with hospital cleaners and healthcare providers to determine the barriers they face in ensuring infection prevention and control on maternity units. In August, we were approached

by WaterAid to contribute to an initial visit to Zanzibar ahead of plans to support the Ministry of Health to improve water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) in maternity units across the islands. We are happy to report our workload and our team is growing and have recently advertised for a new member of staff to be based at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine. With the expansion of activities we are keen to hear from individuals interested in becoming Soapbox volunteers and have many possible opportunities for involvement — read more below!



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## Quick Facts

UNICEF estimates that diarrhoeal diseases kill one child every 30 seconds. Research shows that handwashing with soap prevents many such diseases in a more straightforward and cost-effective way than any other single intervention.<sup>1</sup>

In Africa, 115 people die every hour from diseases linked to poor sanitation, poor hygiene and contaminated water.<sup>2</sup>

A 44% reduction in the risk of newborn death has been estimated if mothers wash their hands with soap prior to handling their babies.<sup>3</sup>



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## The Gambia Embraces New Cleanliness Champions Programme

Recognising the need to revitalise efforts to tackle preventable deaths among mothers and babies, the Ministry of Health (MOH) in the Gambia is currently strengthening a number of its key strategies and policies. The *Gambia Maternity Cleanliness Champions Initiative (MCCI)* is one such strategy to help reduce health-care associated infections in childbirth and related maternal and newborn deaths, and is the outcome of discussions between the Soapbox Collaborative, the Horizons Trust Gambia and the Gambian Ministry of Health. Through a focused set of activities the main outputs of the *MCCI* will be: improved knowledge, attitudes and practices of care providers and support workers (including orderlies); safer, woman-centered maternity environments; stronger advocacy for infection prevention and control (IPC) at all levels; and improved monitoring and evaluation of progress to reducing preventable infections at birth.

The first step in launching the *Gambia MCCI* started with a two day orientation workshop in June to engage key stakeholders at regional and health facility levels. The workshop was attended by 36 participants from the national offices of the MOH, health teams from the Western Region, UN agencies, and labour ward staff from six health facilities. The Deputy Permanent Secretary of the MOH emphasised the importance the Ministry attach to the new *MCCI initiative* and called on participants to "remain committed defenders and implementers of the cause of cleanliness"



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The workshop was a great success and a number of follow-on activities are underway, with the next *MCCI* workshop planned for early 2014. The Gambia is the first country in sub-Saharan Africa to embrace the new programme, and plans are in place for Soapbox to explore interest in other countries in the region.

## First WASH & CLEAN workshop a resounding success!

In our last edition of *Soap Matters* we reported on our successful application to SHARE and WSSCC for research funds. These funds are to support the project in health facilities in India and, through a Soapbox grant, we have been able to extend the research to Bangladesh.

The project, named "WASH and CLEAN on the labour ward: A situation analysis in India and Bangladesh", will develop novel methods for capturing evidence of cleanliness and the relationship to water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) conditions in maternity units.

The first international meeting of the WASH & CLEAN team took

place in Ahmedabad, India in early July. Two members of the team from Aberdeen travelled to India, while three members from BRAC in Bangladesh made the trip to Ahmedabad where they were warmly welcomed by colleagues at the Indian Institute of Public Health. In addition to members of the WASH & CLEAN team, Clare Struthers of PhotoVoice (www.photovoice.org) was present to facilitate a three day workshop on participatory photography. The workshop helped participants to learn about the value of participatory photography.

Following the workshop an additional two-day team meeting took place which enabled the development of the project's conceptual framework and discussion of the practical issues, work including timelines, division of labour, sharing of resources and the development of new data capture tools.

All participants agreed that the meeting

was a huge success. Not only was it incredibly productive in terms of advancement of the project but it also afforded participants the chance to grow together as a team. Participants returned to their respective countries energised and ready to tackle the work ahead. On returning to Bangladesh, Saiful Islam, a former project Research Associate for BRAC commented "I can still feel the momentum [of the workshop]. I am overwhelmed with all the learning outputs and the new horizons of thought... Thank you so very much for giving me such an opportunity".

Testing of the methods developed by the WASH & CLEAN team will begin in health facilities at the end of October.



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## WaterAid & Soapbox in Zanzibar



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Professor Graham, one of Soapbox's co-founders, was approached by WaterAid to join them in exploring a project to support the Zanzibar Ministry of Health (MOH) assess the state of water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) and infection prevention and control (IPC)

in maternity units. The ultimate objective of such an assessment is to inform and strengthen the Ministry's strategy and plans to improve quality of care on maternity units.

An initial scoping visit to Zanzibar took place in September and a work plan for the assessment is currently being finalised.

Soapbox are delighted to be working with such a prestigious organisation as WaterAid and are excited about the opportunities for learning from each other.

We will provide an update on the project's progress in the next newsletter. See below for a glimpse of key indicators relevant to maternal health on the islands of Zanzibar:<sup>4</sup>

Key service indicators	
Total fertility rate	51
Maternal mortality ratio (maternal deaths per 100,000 live births)	362
Infant mortality rate (deaths <1 year per 1000 live births)	54
Births attended by skilled personnel (%)	63
Births by caesarean section (%)	4.7
Births with no postnatal checkup (%)	63.8

## World Sepsis Day 2013 & the World Sepsis Declaration

This year World Sepsis Day fell on 13th September 2013. The day is dedicated to bringing people together behind the World Sepsis Declaration to fight sepsis across the globe.

Since March 2012, 2383 hospitals and organisations around the globe, including the Soapbox Collaborative, have signed the World Sepsis Declaration and that number continues to grow.

Included in the Global Goals of the Declaration and particularly close to the heart of Soapbox are:

- 1). Placing sepsis on the development agenda to increase the political priority given to sepsis by raising awareness of the

growing burden of sepsis;

- 2). Supporting the implementation of international sepsis guidelines to improve earlier recognition and more effective treatment of sepsis and enable adequate prevention and therapy for all people throughout the world;
- 3). Mobilising stakeholders to ensure that strategies to prevent and control the impact of sepsis globally are targeted at those who are most in need.

Approximately every three



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heartbeats someone in the world dies of sepsis. It is one of the leading causes of death across the globe.

In developing countries, sepsis kills over 6 million children and 100,000 mothers every year, and is the second most common cause of maternal death after bleeding. These deaths are almost always preventable with attention to proper hygiene and cleanliness during the birth process, and with timely access to effective treatment when infections arise in mothers or babies – the double opportunities to make a difference which Soapbox continues to champion with others.

[www.world-sepsis-day.org](http://www.world-sepsis-day.org)

## Crowdfund Appeal: Malawi

When the fundraising efforts of Joanne Hagerty and her friend Louise Stewart were brought to the attention of Soapbox we were eager to support their Crowdfund appeal. These energetic individuals sought to raise sufficient means to cover the cost of training two birth assistants for the Mulange Mission Hospital in Southern Malawi. Two thousand five hundred babies are born at the hospital each year, where the training and addition of the two birth assistants would have a significant impact. Joanne and Louise's Crowdfund goal was to raise £650 and Soapbox were happy to contribute.



© 2013 Joanne Hagerty

The Crowdfund goal was just one part of the efforts Joanne and Louise were making to support the hospital. They also joined forces with the health care charity EMMS International on their 2013 Malawi Cycle ride which took 5 days and covered over 400 kms. Altogether the whole ride raised an impressive £60,000 which will be used to fund the primary healthcare programme of the Mulange Hospital for an entire year.

Commenting on her experience at the Mulange Hospital, Joanne said "this was a real glimpse of the Malawi of the future and of things that can be achieved when a small group of people put their minds and resources to doing great things".

Well done, Joanne and Louise!



JustGiving, the world's leading platform for charitable giving is the easiest way to donate money. We are very happy to announce that the Soapbox JustGiving page is now live on our website: [www.soapboxcollaborative.org/](http://www.soapboxcollaborative.org/)

Follow us on Twitter: @Soapbox\_Collab

Find us on Facebook: The Soapbox Collaborative

## We're expanding!

We have recently advertised for a new member of staff. The full-time research post is funded for 12 months initially and will be based at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine. The post-holder will contribute to secondary research around hygiene and infection prevention at the time of childbirth. We have had an excellent response to this position and interviewing will take place in early October.

## Would you like to get involved?

There are various different types of opportunities for involvement in Soapbox activities, so do please register your interest by emailing

[info@soapboxcollaborative.org](mailto:info@soapboxcollaborative.org)