



Soap Matters



**Saving lives
with clean safe
care at birth**

February 2016

Issue 11

Zimbabwe

January 2016 saw the completion of our project in Zimbabwe, funded by Soapbox and developed in partnership with ZimHealth. The project was based in Kwekwe City, a mining and industrialised area which has been facing significant challenges in health care delivery due to negative economic growth.

In 2014, Kwekwe's four council clinics, which along with Kwekwe General Hospital serve a population of 104,000, applied to Soapbox for funds and technical support to improve their infection prevention and control (IPC) activities. Following an exploratory visit in November 2014, including a needs assessment of facilities, Soapbox agreed to fund IPC improvements.

Over the last year the teams at the clinics have made an outstanding commitment to improving their IPC, aided by a multi-disciplinary IPC Committee established in the early stages of the project, which has been able to support the ongoing policy development, audit and training initiatives.

With Soapbox's support, an observational hand hygiene audit tool and hand hygiene training workshops for skilled and non-skilled workers have been developed. Ninety members of staff have now been trained using a "training the trainer" approach, and plans have been made to embed both the hand hygiene audit and regular training in to routine practice. The hands-on, participatory-based training was well received by all staff with the significant majority of both skilled and non-skilled workers strongly agreeing that they had gained knowledge and/or skills as a result of the training.

Phyllis Gochera, Director of Health Services, who led the project in Zimbabwe reported, 'I really learnt a lot and it was a pleasure making a difference in Kwekwe City clinics. I hope the standards will be maintained'.

The Soapbox Collaborative has been delighted to work in partnership with the KweKwe Clinics and Zimhealth to improve maternity facilities in the area, and is grateful to Phyllis and her staff for their commitment to continued improvement in IPC as we continue the mission to support clean safe care at birth.



Thank you to Neesha for raising funds and awareness of the work of The Soapbox Collaborative

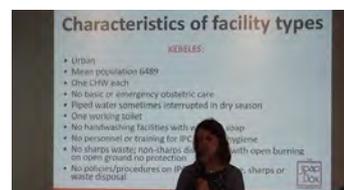
Running to save lives....

'I have been a proud midwife for 11 years now and have always observed a keen interest in hand hygiene. The work The Soapbox Collaborative is doing is of great interest to me as my grandparents originate from India and both my parents grew up in Africa. As a family, we are aware of the hardships faced by people living in developing countries and the daily challenge they face regarding hygiene during childbirth. Completing the Preston Run was a personal challenge of mine – I am not a natural runner and need plenty of encouragement to put on a pair of trainers and run around the streets of Preston! However, I decided to enter the run and created a JustGiving page for donations to The Soapbox Collaborative. My eight year old daughter was the best encouragement I could have asked for and I was delighted when she said she would run alongside me. September came and so did the sunshine. The Preston Run took place in Avenham Park on a beautiful sunny day and after several laps around the park, we did it! Friends and family from all across the world donated so generously and thanks to their kindness and support, we managed to raise £396.'

Soapbox and WaterAid Join Forces

Soapbox is pleased to announce a new collaboration with the NGO WaterAid, made possible following a UK Aid Match award from the Department for International Development. This government funding matches the totals raised by donations following public appeals. As part of its ambition to achieve universal access to water, sanitation and hygiene, WaterAid has chosen to work again with Soapbox, having worked with us previously in Zanzibar. We look forward to sharing our expertise in promoting environmental and hand hygiene in health facilities where women give birth.

Over the next few months Sandra Virgo from our Soapbox team at the London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine will be working closely with WaterAid country partners and local stakeholders in Ethiopia and Malawi to learn how our expertise and their needs might fit together. It is anticipated that this will include a focus on hygiene training in some of the larger health facilities. Soapbox looks forward to a productive partnership with WaterAid resulting in clean safe care at birth for mothers in Ethiopia and Malawi.



Spartan Sprint Fundraiser

We're hugely excited to announce that Soapbox Ambassador Heidi Gardner and friend Becca McGuckin will be running the Spartan Sprint this summer to raise money for The Soapbox Collaborative. In their words, the Spartan Sprint is "a 5km run through Scottish hills (run is probably inaccurate, read: walk, shuffle, drag) interspersed with 15 horrendous obstacles."

Donate to their Just Giving page at www.justgiving.com/Heidi-and-Becca

Ethiopia

The Soapbox Collaborative continues its exciting partnership with Felege Hiwot Hospital in Ethiopia, supporting improvements in quality of care. Felege Hiwot Hospital is a busy referral hospital based in the regional capital of the Northern Amhara Region, Bahir Dar serving seven million people and having a high patient load of, on average, 15,000 patients monthly. The hospital has 400 beds and an occupancy rate of 180%. Despite a challenging environment, staff at the hospital have been working extensively to improve both infrastructure and quality of care with Soapbox working alongside them to strengthen infection prevention and control (IPC).

Dr. Ruth Lawley, Senior Representative of Soapbox visited the hospital in January 2016 and was encouraged to see widespread improvements, from improved facilities including laboratory and patient waiting areas to enhanced organisation of the emergency triage. Dr. Lawley commented, 'The maternity area was cleaner and better organised than I have ever seen it, use of checklists and EWS was demonstrated on random checks'.

Felege Hiwot Hospital also have ambitious plans for continuous improvements with the extension of their antenatal clinic and other new hospital developments. The staff were also encouraged by a recent visit from Dr Kassele, Minister of Health who was impressed with the progress being made.

Soapbox is committed to the continued partnership and looks forward to creating skill exchange opportunities throughout 2016. The first of these being a visit to Aberdeen in February by three Ethiopian colleagues who have been involved in the partnership for some time. Along with our regular visits and support of the student exchange programme, we are also excited about an opportunity later in the year for professionals to be involved in skill sharing workshops at Felege Hiwot Hospital. If you are interested in finding out more about how you can be involved, please contact our office.



The entrance to Felege Hiwot Hospital, Ethiopia

WaterAid Briefing Note

We all know we should wash our hands before and after certain activities to prevent the spread of germs however rarely do we acknowledge that hand hygiene can actually save lives. In hospital and healthcare settings, the hand hygiene of healthcare workers has been advocated as the single most important way to prevent the spread of harmful germs and reduce potentially fatal healthcare associated infections such as MRSA. However, despite its importance, the hand hygiene of healthcare workers across the world is unacceptably poor.



Soapbox and WaterAid teamed up to produce a Briefing Paper highlighting key factors to consider when developing strategies to improve hand hygiene in healthcare settings, based on WHO guidelines, recent systematic reviews and WaterAid's policy and programmatic experience.

To read about barriers to hand hygiene and the latest evidence and priorities on how to improve practices go to soapboxcollaborative.org/?p=3650

Inside the Maternity Bags of Expectant Mothers



A recent BBC News article with photographs taken by WaterAid takes "a peek inside the maternity bags of expectant mothers around the world", and provided an excellent illustration of the stark contrasts between high and low income countries and the varying culture and needs around the time of delivery. The women describe their experiences in the article, with one expectant mother from the USA lamenting "you want the best for your baby, and it's devastating to think about dangers such as contaminated water and unhygienic facilities. I imagine a world where all women have a safe, clean place to birth their babies."

To read more about the conditions women across the world face at delivery and have a look inside their maternity bags, go to www.bbc.co.uk/news/in-pictures-35399453

Welcoming new staff to Soapbox...

Liz McLoed

Liz's interest in global health was sparked when she had the opportunity to travel to Nicaragua in 2013 to study economic development, with an emphasis in income, education, and health. After receiving her Bachelor's Degree in biology from the University of New Mexico, Liz has moved to the UK to pursue her MSc in Global Health and Management at the University of Aberdeen. She has joined The Soapbox Collaborative on placement, working to help develop an environmental hygiene training tool for domestic service staff in low-income countries.



Emma Morrison

Emma Morrison is the Soapbox Collaborative's Scientific Project Officer, with a degree in biomedical science and several years of experience in microbiology research. In her new role with the Soapbox Collaborative, Emma aims to determine whether environmental surveillance can be used as an effective intervention for the prevention and reduction of life-threatening healthcare-associated infections in mothers and newborns in low and middle income countries. Emma is also Professor Wendy Graham's Personal Scientific Assistant.

