

Zimbabwe is facing big challenges in maternal health, with an average of 570 maternal deaths occurring per 100,000 live births every year compared to just 12 maternal deaths per 100,000 live births in the UK⁵. The Zimbabwe Network for

also working with Rimuka Maternity Home to implement renovations, repairs and redecoration and to improve their daily water supply. Undertaking this essential maintenance has prepared the Home for the provision of new equipment bought using funds provided by Soapbox.

NEEDS ASSESSMENT TOOL

Supporting health facilities to assess their own needs in terms of improving the provision of clean care at birth is one of the priorities of Soapbox. Such assessments can also help to inform applications for funds to the Collaborative from facilities or organisations. The experts assisting the set-up of Soapbox have been working in the field of

maternal health for many years and fully recognise the importance of such self-assessments.

A Labour and Delivery Unit Needs Assessment Tool for infection prevention and control has thus been developed based on a number of existing instruments. Questions included in the Soapbox tool explore issues of overcrowding (*How often do you have more women in labour than you have beds?*); training needs (*Is training on infection prevention provided to non-medical staff not involved in direct patient care e.g. maintenance, cleaning, kitchen staff?*); and in relation to the facility as a whole (*Is there a person/team responsible for conducting infection control activities?*).

Once a tool like this has been developed it is necessary to test its reliability and feasibility with the 'people in the know' - maternal health professionals with first hand experience of labour and delivery units in developing countries. In addition to feedback from our own team members, the tool has been reviewed by obstetricians, nurses and

midwives from a number of countries and has recently been piloted in The Gambia. We have received very valuable feedback and with the relevant adjustments made, the Labour and Delivery Unit Assessment Tool will now be shared with health facilities and organisations applying for Soapbox funds.

The results of such assessments can also serve as a baseline measure from which health facilities can monitor and evaluate their own progress in addressing infection prevention and control and improving the provision of clean delivery care to all mothers and babies.