Welcome to the autumn edition of health in action. I am the Country Director for Health Poverty Action’s programmes in Somaliland. More than two decades of civil war in neighbouring Somalia have weakened this region’s infrastructure and there are many obstacles in the fight against poor health and poverty. But we’re working with the brilliant, determined people here to strengthen health services and create a brighter future for mothers and children.

You can also read about an ambitious new project to ensure women have equal access to healthcare in Central America, and our wonderful health volunteers using simple yet effective tools to improve health in Cambodia.

**PLUS**

Take action on the world’s Missing Medicines, organise a School Stomp, and get a place in the 2016 London Marathon!
Improving the health of mothers and children in Somaliland

Somalia has a shadowy reputation. Many preconceptions about this country would not include the idea that the poorest individuals could lead the way in fighting for better health. But that is exactly what some inspiring people in the breakaway, self-declared Republic of Somaliland are doing.

Since the overthrow of a military dictator in 1991, a brutal civil war in Somalia has forced thousands of people to travel north to the independent state and relative safety of Somaliland. Here, in the informal settlements they have created in urban areas, and in the harder-to-reach rural areas, people lack essential infrastructure such as safe water, sanitation and health services. This has a particularly harmful impact on pregnant women and children.

In Somaliland a woman dies from a pregnancy-related cause every seven hours, and every year nearly 25,000 women suffer injuries and disability simply because of childbirth. Those children who lose their mothers are up to ten times more likely to die before their second birthday.

It's hard to believe that this injustice is faced by so many purely because of where they are born. But there are people here determined to change this, and they have been thrilled to discover how they can fight for better health, through Health Poverty Action.

Muhibo is one of the mothers who has been able to safeguard her life and the lives of her children, thanks to the people and services we've strengthened with your support.

Muhibo was married in 2010 at the age of 14. She first heard about the healthcare services available to her through a Community Conversation group organised by Health Poverty Action. Here, trusted community leaders, trained by us, explained where to go for her check-ups, what to expect when she got there, and reassured her concerns about being treated outside her own community.

Muhibo has been coming to her local health facility, which is funded by Health Poverty Action, for several years now, and has been supported through two pregnancies. After complications in her first pregnancy, Muhibo was given family planning advice and contraceptives to ensure she could recover her health before having another child.
Several years later, when she went into labour again, staff at the health facility referred her straight to the closest hospital, in one of the three ambulances also supported by Health Poverty Action.

Initially Muhibo and her family were very worried about the fees they thought they would have to pay. When they were told that all of her treatment — including transport, admission to and treatment in hospital, her baby’s safe delivery by caesarean section, and ongoing support back in their own community — was free, they were relieved beyond words.

Muhibo now returns to the local health facility for check-ups, to proudly show off her little boy, and to share how happy she is with her treatment.

“I have a good relationship with this facility. They have given us all the treatment we need. They don’t charge me anything and they don’t treat me any differently. If this facility was not here, I don’t know what I would do!”

Muhibo knows that the services she has come to rely on are vital to saving the lives of other women and babies – which is why she’s now spreading the word in her own community too.

With regular donations from people like you, Health Poverty Action can ensure that these services are here for generations to come.

We’ve supported the construction of a neonatal unit and three paediatric wards in the most remote areas of Somaliland, as well as road and boat ambulances, operating theatres, essential medicines and equipment. This has helped reduce the number of child deaths during birth by 70%.

We’ve also invested in solar panels for a hospital and 10 health facilities, so patients are not at the mercy of regular power shortages, ensuring 24-hour care and saving the hospital £5,000 a month in energy bills.

But poor health is not solved by making services available and free – people need to know they have the right to them, and demand them when that right is denied. That’s why we trained 869 community leaders this year to speak about the importance of health checks in pregnancy, nutrition and the dangers of FGM.

Last year over 104,000 women like Muhibo were able to access vital treatment, thanks to the volunteers and health workers we’ve supported.

Thank you for standing with them in their fight for better health - for everyone.
Meet a health worker: Nimco Jama
Technical Officer for Health Poverty Action in Somaliland

Nimco’s role is very varied. She ensures that the health facilities managed by Health Poverty Action are properly stocked, oversees the supply of equipment and materials for training sessions, and is proud to have played a part in installing innovative new solar panels in health facilities.

“Small-scale solutions to practical problems are important. The solar panels have helped us manage the unreliable power supply so we can better guarantee the continuity of health services.”

£20 could fund work like Nimco’s to strengthen life-saving health services in Somaliland and elsewhere.

Thank you

If you are a UK taxpayer and tick the Gift Aid box below when you make a donation, HMRC will add an extra 25p for every pound you donate. You only have to do it once to ensure that all your future donations and any you have made in the last four years will automatically be topped up.

Don’t forget to Gift Aid it!

“I confirm I am a UK taxpayer and I would like Health Poverty Action to treat all donations I have made over the past four years and all donations I make in future (unless I notify you otherwise) as Gift Aid donations.”

You must pay an amount of Income Tax and/or Capital Gains Tax at least equal to the amount that all charities or Community Amateur Sports Clubs will reclaim on your donations.

You can also donate securely online at healthpovertyaction.org/make-a-single-donation
New global goals

This September, heads of state from around the world will be meeting to sign off the new Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) – a set of global goals to replace the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

These goals are likely to shape the development agenda for the next 15 years. **Whilst we can’t pretend that they present a radical shift in tackling global inequality, they do represent an improvement on the MDGs.**

Firstly, the SDGs were developed through a more inclusive process, with consultations held across the world. Secondly, they acknowledge the need to reduce inequality and reach those who were failed by the MDGs. Finally, the SDGs will apply to all countries, North and South.

Health Poverty Action has been calling for goals on inequality and healthy lives, and for the data by which progress is measured to be broken down by ethnicity. We are delighted that all these things are included!

However, the process is not over. The indicators that will be used to track progress are being developed over the next few months. It is widely recognised that what isn’t measured won’t be counted. **The indicators will therefore be the real test of how the framework will deliver.** We’ll be watching closely and will keep you updated.

A new story for indigenous women

Across Nicaragua, Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador there are around 6.4 million indigenous people. Living in extreme poverty, indigenous women in particular must battle for the health rights others take for granted. The obstacles are physical, in their distance from health facilities, and cultural, in language barriers and the discrimination they face from health workers.

We’ve launched an exciting cross-country project to ensure that these women are included in progress being made around the world. With funding from the European Commission and Big Lottery Fund, we’re supporting trusted local partner organisations who have worked here for decades.

**Everyone involved in women’s healthcare will be included in its development, from health staff to indigenous leaders, teachers and young people.**

We’re creating videos in indigenous languages and bringing people together to change how indigenous women view health services, and vice versa. This is a crucial step for indigenous women, involving them in creating health services they can truly rely on.

Simple solutions

The causes of poverty and poor health can seem overwhelmingly complex. But the simple solutions used by volunteers we’re training are incredibly effective.

Sovann is a health volunteer in Preah Vihear, a remote and very poor province in Cambodia. Because many in his community cannot read, he uses illustrated posters, provided by Health Poverty Action, to educate people on health and hygiene issues.

“I use my posters to do health training every month. Before, there was little awareness of health issues, but now things like malaria have been reduced because people know how to use the mosquito nets.”

Thanks to volunteers like Sovann, communities in Cambodia are taking huge steps towards health. We’re reaching 64,000 people here by supporting community health volunteers, as well as training midwives and providing the tools families need to grow nutritious food.

Sovann is quietly optimistic. “There are many issues to overcome – but we work together.” **Thank you for supporting inspiring people like Sovann around the world in their fight for health.**
Take action on Missing Medicines

Millions of people die every year from killer diseases because it is not profitable to develop a treatment. If the research and development of medicine was based on global need, not profit, millions of lives could be saved.

For example, drug-resistant tuberculosis (TB) affects many people in poor communities. Treatment is painful, expensive and only around 50% successful. Yet in the past 50 years there have been just two new TB treatments developed. Pharmaceutical companies have no incentive when most sufferers live in poverty.

We're asking the UK government to lead the way in reforming the research and development system.

Please support our Missing Medicines campaign at healthpovertyaction.org/speaking-out/missing-medicines

London Marathon

24 April 2016

Feeling inspired to improve your fitness and take on a big challenge?

Why not join our 2016 London Marathon team and help us raise money to improve healthcare worldwide? In 2015 our Marathon runners raised a whopping £53,000 for Health Poverty Action!

Find out more at healthpovertyaction.org/support-our-work/challenges/london-marathon or contact Jessica on 020 7840 3762.

STOMP out inequality

Everyone deserves the best chance at health, regardless of where they are born.

The School Stomp is a sponsored walk for children of all ages, to raise money for the world’s poorest communities and encourage students to think about health and poverty whilst doing an activity that’s good for their health.

If you know a school who may wish to organise a STOMP, please visit healthpovertyaction.org/schoolstomp/ and get in touch to find out more.

Leaving a legacy

You may recently have received a letter from Health Poverty Action about our new Legacy Society, which we’ve set up to acknowledge all those who’ve made the generous decision to leave us a gift in their will.

Thank you to everyone who responded to the enclosed survey. Knowing your plans enables us to better plan the future of Health Poverty Action and with it, the future health of the millions of poor and marginalised people we reach.

If you’d like to find out more about how you can strengthen the health of the world’s poorest in this way, please contact Sarah on 020 7840 3766 or s.smith@healthpovertyaction.org. Thank you.

Health through Peace: Medact Conference

13-14 November 2015

Conflict ends and blights the lives of hundreds of millions worldwide. We must approach this as one of the root causes of poverty and poor health, in order to tackle it.

If you’re interested in improving global health through ending conflict, please come to the conference we’re hosting with Medact and other inspiring organisations working to improve the health of people around the world. The Friday will be a ‘teach-in’, where anyone can learn about some of the complex but urgent issues we currently face; from the development of drone weapons, to the crisis on Europe’s Eastern borders. On Saturday, some of the brightest and creative minds from the worlds of peace and health will be speaking in more detail.

It promises to be a really exciting and inspiring event! Find out more at healthpovertyaction.org/support-our-work/upcoming-events/

Health Poverty Action works to strengthen poor and marginalised people in their struggle for health.

Health Poverty Action, 31-33 Bondway, Vauxhall, London SW8 1SJ
+44(0) 20 7840 3777 | www.healthpovertyaction.org | Charity no. 290535
www.facebook.com/HealthPovertyAction | Twitter @HealthPoverty