



OUR BODIES OURSELVES

FALL 2008 NEWSLETTER



INSPIRING A WORLDWIDE MOVEMENT OF WOMEN'S HEALTH

◆ **Motorcycles and Megaphones: The Evolution of *Our Bodies, Ourselves***

By Ayesha Chatterjee and Sally Whelan

Each year our Global Translation/Adaptation Program receives approximately ten new inquiries from women's groups around the world eager to translate and adapt *Our Bodies, Ourselves* for women and girls in their countries. Our partners develop innovative versions of this classic resource in a variety of formats that include e-books, training booklets, digital content for mobile phones, and information campaigns, and receive support and technical assistance from our program through the project lifecycle. As a result of these collaborations, what was "just a book" evolves into a dynamic health literacy tool developed and used by women across the globe to inform, lead, and change their communities.

Here we highlight how two groups are using their unique materials based on *Our Bodies, Ourselves* to bring individuals of different socio-economic and literacy levels information on the health issues of vital importance to them, their families, and communities.

In Nigeria, Women for Empowerment, Development, and Gender Reform is adapting content from *Our Bodies, Ourselves* on issues such as sexuality, safer sex, HIV, birth control, and childbearing, into two local dialects – Pidgin English and Yoruba. They are developing visually compelling outreach materials for wider access and impact, and despite minimal resources, last year reached 280,000 women and girls in their community with vital information on their health and sexuality. A peer-educator training program has been particularly successful and as a result, 420 village hairdressers are currently disseminating health information to clients who visit their salons weekly. Coordinators have also reached neighboring rural communities with simple health messages through a motorcycle and megaphone campaign, and developed colorful posters and stickers for the local canoe system that transports women and girls from remote farms to marketplaces. These impressive achievements have not been without ongoing challenges that

necessitate prompt and inventive action. In one example, when men refused to allow their female partners to attend outreach programs, coordinators visited individual homes and counseled men on the importance of health and sexuality education; this exercise ultimately morphed into a full-scale program with active male participation.

Our second example comes from China, where candid discussion on health issues such as sexually transmitted infections and violence is often subject to government scrutiny. A group of women translators, communications specialists, filmmakers, lawyers, investors, publishers, journalists, and public health professionals is translating excerpts from *Our Bodies, Ourselves* into Chinese. With topics ranging from relationships and sexuality, medical problems and procedures, basic self-care and growing older, the group will develop their content in formats that include print, video, and digital downloads for mobile phones. Coordinators are first introducing noncontroversial topics into the community to assess possible government regulation, and will consider an adaptation of the entire book at a later stage.

Adaptation projects provide a cost-effective model for how an inspiring product and tested process can be molded to specific socio-cultural contexts, and provide multiple channels for women's groups to educate and advocate on behalf of women and girls in their country and around the world. We would like to thank our funders and donors for their ongoing support, and invite you to contact us for more information on the program and ways you can contribute to our global initiatives.

For more information, please contact: Ayesha Chatterjee, Program Associate, at ayesha@bwhbc.org or Sally Whelan, Program Manager, at sally@bwhbc.org.



Women's Rehabilitation Center in Nepal recently completed the cultural adaptation of training booklets based on *Our Bodies, Ourselves* to promote community health literacy.

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OBOS Welcomes New Board Members

OBOS is pleased to announce the addition of five new board members.

- Caroline Crosbie, MBA, has 25 years of program and management experience in international reproductive health, with an emphasis on design, negotiation and implementation of major programs, and fundraising in the public and private sectors. As Senior Vice President of Pathfinder International, she oversees all program planning and operations, both at headquarters and in the field.
- Bea Bezmalinovic Dhebar, MPH, MBA, has over thirteen years of experience working as an international health and development consultant in more than 26 countries. She has also worked as a researcher and consultant on various non-profit initiatives, including a Harvard Business School faculty's review of accountability of non-profit organizations, the US Agency for International Development, and the International Center for Research on Women.
- Catherine L. Annas, JD, is the Director of the Eastern Massachusetts Healthcare Initiative (EMHI), a group of hospitals, health plans, provider groups and universities working to create a high-performance healthcare system in Eastern Massachusetts. Prior to joining EMHI, Catherine served for five years as the Director of Patient Safety at the MA Department of Public Health and the Betsy Lehman Center for Patient Safety and Medical Error Reduction. She currently serves as co-editor of the Boston Bar Association's Health Law Reporter.
- Katie Reilly, RN, MPH, is a public health nurse for the MA Department of Public Health and works in the areas of infectious disease and emergency preparedness. She also works as a per-diem nurse at Children's Hospital in Boston. Katie was a Peace Corps Volunteer in Honduras, where she was immersed in the culture, became fluent in Spanish and worked with local health workers to improve community health.
- Joanne L. Barker, MS, is a marketing and communications professional who specializes in developing print and multimedia communications tools to effectively promote products, services, and ideas. With more than 15 years of experience, Joanne brings extensive knowledge of health communications, health information technology, HIV/AIDS and domestic violence to the OBOS board.

With the welcoming of new board members, we must also say goodbye to Patricia Roche and Amanda Buck Varella, both retiring after their six-year term limits. The staff and board extend their deepest gratitude for Amanda's valued guidance and leadership as Board Chair, and Patricia's multiple roles, most notably as Chair of the Global Translation/Adaptation Committee, on which she continues to serve as a member.

Pictured below are some of the staff and board members at the September 2008 retreat.



Collaborating for Greater Impact

As always, OBOS collaborates with other social justice organizations to ensure that an evidence-based approach is incorporated in public policies and institutional decisions that affect women's health and well being. Our current collaborators include:

- Breast Cancer Action (San Francisco)
- Amaranth Productions (New York), producers of *Absolutely Safe*--a film about breast implant safety
- Generations Ahead and the Center for Genetics and Society (Oakland, CA)
- Childbirth Connection, the NY-based organization that authored the new landmark report on evidence-based maternity care, released in early October along with the Milbank Memorial Fund and the Reforming States Group.
- Physicians and midwives from across the country who are concerned about improving maternity care and helped develop a "choices in childbirth" statement, calling for more availability of VBACs (vaginal birth after a cesarean), greater access to Certified Nurse-Midwives and Certified Midwives in all settings where they practice, and licensure/regulation of Certified Professional Midwives (who primarily attend home births). Please visit www.ourbodiesourselves.org to view the statement.



Barbara Brenner (above) is the Executive Director of Breast Cancer Action and contributes monthly to Our Bodies Our Blog. With Judy Norsigian now serving on Breast Cancer Action's National Advisory Council, both groups are working together more closely.

New Office and Associate Director

We are pleased to announce that we have moved and are now sharing office space in Porter Square, Cambridge, with our long-time colleagues at the Council for Responsible Genetics.

We are also the grateful recipients of an anonymous donation that will allow OBOS to hire an Associate Director for three years as part of our succession planning. We hope to hire this person by early 2009.

OBOS is Making Headlines

Media attention this year included a prominent article by Linda Gordon in *The Nation* (June 2008). Gordon reviews the history and impact of the Our Bodies Ourselves Global Translation/Adaptation Program and highlights Kathy Davis' book, *The Making of "Our Bodies, Ourselves": How Feminism Travels Across Borders*. Notes Gordon:

"The progressive social movements of the last half-century produced millions of pages of print, from manifestos to journalism to novels, but nothing as influential as Our Bodies, Ourselves. The feminist women's health manual is the American left's most valuable written contribution to the world."

Two additional articles about Our Bodies Ourselves were published this fall in noteworthy journals. "How To Encourage Women To Consider a Less Medicalized Approach To Childbirth Without Turning Them Off: Challenges To Producing The New *Our Bodies, Ourselves: Pregnancy and Birth*," written by Kiki Zeldes and Judy Norsigian, was published in the September issue of the journal *BIRTH*.

"Write A Chapter and Change the World: How the Boston Women's Health Book Collective Transformed Women's Health Then and Now," written by Heather Stephenson and Kiki Zeldes, was published in the October issue of the *American Journal of Public Health*.

A Daily Dose of Women's Health News

Gay Marriage Legal in CT ... Keeping an Eye on Medical Research Ethics? ... Questioning the War on Fat ...

Where can you turn to find the latest women's health news and spot-on analysis of the politics of women's health care? Our Bodies, Our Blog (OBOB), of course, your daily resource for coverage of domestic and global health news, research, and events.

Our blog continues to attract diverse audiences and generous praise. Currently in its third year, the blog's readership continues to grow, averaging over 12,500 visits per month, which is more than double the number of visits in the previous year. According to Technorati.com, 170 other blogs have linked to OBOB in the past six months, further demonstrating its reach and impact.

Get Our Bodies Our Blog delivered straight to your e-mail. Subscribe at www.ourbodiesourselves.org.



OUR BODIES OURSELVES

New Address!

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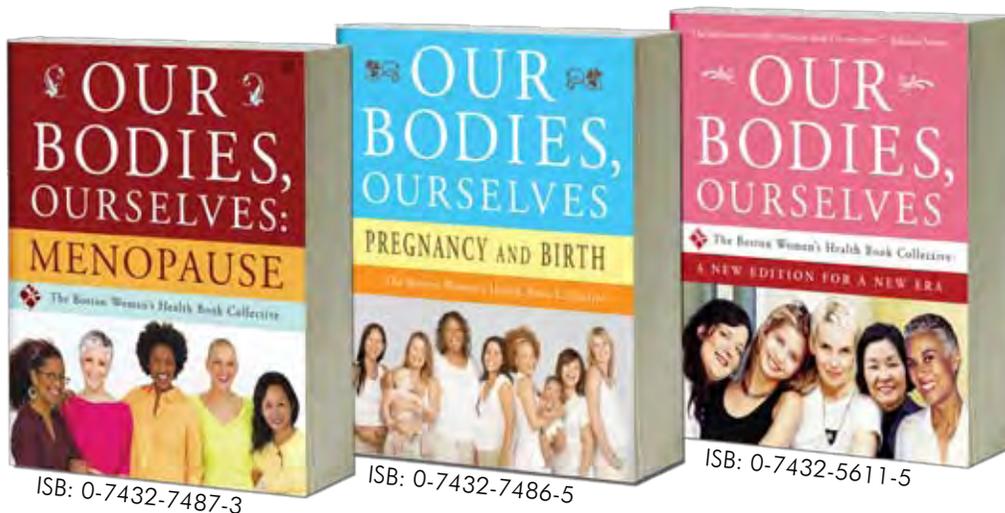
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Sally Whelan - Program Manager
Kiki Zeldes - Web Manager

Holiday Gift Giving

Are you searching for the perfect holiday gift? Consider giving a copy of *Our Bodies, Ourselves*. Or perhaps you're looking for a gift for a person who has everything. Make a donation to OBOS in honor of a family member or friend.



Congratulations to All Birth Book Contributors

Our Bodies, Ourselves: Pregnancy and Birth has been chosen as a finalist in the "Wellness" category for the Books For A Better Life Awards! Winners will be announced in February 2009.