



# Big Belly Business

The Women's Health Innovation Program of Liberia

A partnership funded by

The US State Department

Office of Global Women's Issues



Hear the **Big Belly** audio on our website!

## The Birth of a Book 50,000 delivered

*Big Belly Business* is a beautiful, evidence-based book about pregnancy written in simple Liberian English, filled with stories, health information and wisdom collected from across the country. Written by Liberian writers, and, joyously illustrated by Liberian artist Chase Walker, *Big Belly Business* is easy and fun to read. Those who can't read can learn in the Big Belly Club, or listen to the book on the radio or on a phone. A book, journal, and pencil are also free for "big belly women" in the program.



## Join the Big Belly Club

### A group program of joyous learning & support

In the last year, 13 organizations across Liberia have brought together pregnant women, men and elders at



A Big Belly Club  
Tower Hill, Margibi County

over 100 Big Belly Clubs each week. Big Belly Sisters invite everyone to the club to talk, learn, laugh, and plan together for healthier pregnancies and safer deliveries.

The club uses the *Big Belly Business* book to find health information and stories, and the "framework" to ensure everyone has a chance to share, write or draw their own story – and ask, and discuss their own questions – together deciding what they want for themselves, their families and their community. Sisters also visit members at home and in ANC waiting rooms.

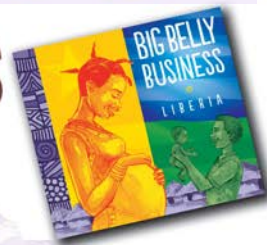
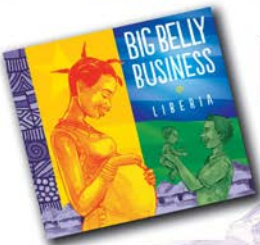


**Traditional Women United for Peace**  
Over 100 Liberians from 13 NGOs across the country are trained *Big Belly Sisters* or *Brothers*.



**Afromed** launched their program with what may be the biggest, Big Belly Club ever!

## BIG BELLY BUSINESS IS EVERYBODY'S BUSINESS



**“I do not want this program to stop.** Because the different thing is educating us to know we should take care of ourselves, how we should take care of our babies, and how our husbands should take care of us. My husband reads the Big Belly book to me. To him, I am now the chicken’s egg. **Things cannot change in one day but small, small they are changing. So I thank you.”**



**Leyla Cooper, a member of Africare’s Bong County Mom’s Club has had 7 pregnancies and 2 surviving children. She and her husband have started weekly savings with help from her Big Belly Sister to pay for any emergency costs and have moved to town so they are close to a hospital**

**“Now I can write my name** and I am learning to read and take care of myself as a pregnant woman. This is my second child. There is so much I did not know before about how my body worked.”



**Musu Tamba, a member Traditional Women United for Peace’s Big Belly Club is holding a Big Belly Journal where she’s written her name, and her baby’s.**

## Voices from Big Belly Clubs



**“I felt very disappointed in myself. I had decided after High School I would get an education. But I got pregnant. Because of the courage I got from this program I am back in school to become a nurse.”**

**Princess Millmouno ,a former member of the Baby Ma Village Big Belly Club is now a trained Big Belly Sister.**

**“It was hard for us to get the pregnant women to come to the Maternal Waiting Home. We used to get about three to four persons... but now because of the Big Belly Club we get fifteen to eighteen a month.**

**Since the Big Belly Clubs start we have not had any maternal death.”**



**Midwife Gracious Meapeh and Big Belly Sister Ma Marie run Big Belly Clubs across Handii, Bong County**



**King Gray Village has a vibrant Big Belly Club.**

**“We go to the Big Belly Club because we learn together.**

**But also, it is fun to make friends.**

**The stories in the book made us not want to stop talking.”**

# THE LAUNCH EVENT

In August 2016 we celebrated the program's rollout with singing and stories by women in Big Belly Clubs, testimonies and certification of Big Belly Sisters and Brothers, and endorsement speeches by Government Officials from the Ministries of Gender, Health and Education and partner NGO leadership.



## Comments from Liberian Leaders

“Our people die from things that they should not die from. We will need more copies of this book, because once you open it, you have to share that information.

**They will find really great improvement when the evaluation comes.”**



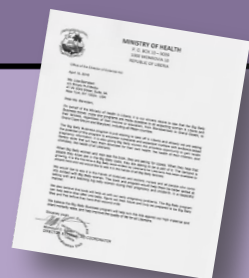
**Rosana Schaack (left), ED of THINK receiving BB Sister Certification from Big Belly Board Chair, Dr. Wilhelmina Jallah.**



**Julia Duncan Cassell,  
Minister of Gender & Development**

“We are proud of this initiative and delighted to be collaborating with other Ministries. This book is so simple it makes it so easy that anyone can read it. It is important that pregnant women know they can go back to school.

**I hope to expand this program to all the 15 counties.”**



“On behalf of the Ministry of Health of Liberia it is our sincere desire to see that the Big Belly Business books, club, and program are made available to all expecting women in Liberia.”



Liberian Ministry of Health Chief Medical Officer, Dr. Francis Kateh, Family Health Division Director, Dr. Joseph Kerkula and the Big Belly team meet to plan the integration of the Big Belly Business program into programs across Liberia, and for training of Liberian midwives and certification for community health workers.

# BIG Belly Business

1

## FUNDING:

In 2014 the US State Department Office of Global Women's Issues funded the What To Expect Foundation to create the Women's Health Innovation Program in Liberia and Bangladesh.

2

## The Pilot (at a glance)

## CREATING:

A team of US and Liberian editors, artists, educators and writers created the Big Belly Business book, framework and training program. They identified Liberian NGOs who could implement the program and helped them apply to the State Department for small grants of book, training and funds to run Big Belly Clubs. In 2015, 50,000 copies were delivered to the Liberian port.

3

## IMPLEMENTING:

The State Department chose The Open Society In West Africa (OSIWA) to house the Liberian Big Belly team and partner with INGO Simply Put (the team that created the book and program) to train and support implementing partners. In November 2015 Big Belly Sisters and Brothers were trained, and partners were funded to launch Big Belly Clubs.

## Those partners are:

Africare, AfroMed, Hope For Women International, Rescue Our People, Life Line Liberia, The Lutheran Church of Liberia, New Narratives, Obaa's Girls, Peace Clinic, PHIL, POCAWHAIN, Save the Children, The Sirleaf Market Women's Fund, THINK, Todhe Resource Center, Traditional Women United For Peace, United Church of the World, War Affected Women Education Empowerment Program (WAWEEP)

**Media Partner:** New Narratives



50,000  
Copies of  
Big Belly Business  
journals &  
pencils

7,500  
Big belly  
women & men  
in BB Clubs

**Join the club!**  
moses@bigbellybusiness.org  
&  
Lisa@simplyputmedia.org

7  
Counties with  
Big Belly Clubs  
marked with a

117  
Trained Big  
Belly Sisters &  
Brothers

100  
Big Belly Clubs  
Each week

18  
NGO Partners

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