



Annual Report 2023

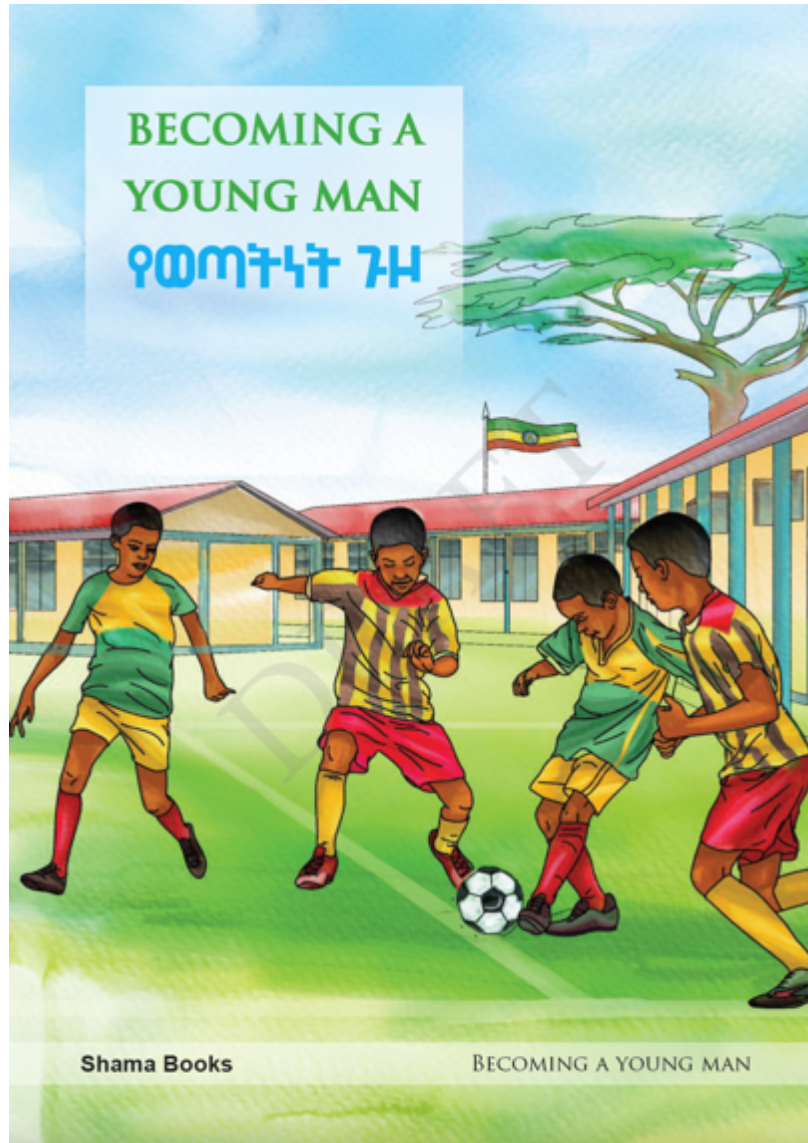


Image: [Developing the Ethiopia boy's puberty book](#)

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Board of Directors

Chairman:	Jill Sommer
Vice Chairman:	John Walker
Secretary/Treasurer:	Bridget Boyle

Staff

President:	Marni Sommer
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2023 Field Teams

Ethiopia:	Allison Carney, Kahsay Sibhat, Mesfin Demissie
USA boy's book:	Sarah Blake, Angel Ornelas, Stephen Oduro, Brian Villa
USA girl's book:	Angela Nguyen & masters of public health students

Website(s):	www.growandknow.org www.agirlsguide.org
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Introduction

This year was spent finalizing our Ethiopia boy's puberty book, focusing on gaining government approvals for our books, and conducting activities in the USA and other countries to build more understanding about the best ways to reach girls and boys (and adults in their lives) with our puberty books!

Key accomplishments from 2023 included:

- Finalizing our Ethiopia boy's puberty book and submitting to the government for approval for use in schools!
- Initiating the participatory research to develop a USA boy's puberty book!
- Partnering with CVS Health on promoting our USA girl's puberty book!
- Conducting learning with after school programs in New York and Connecticut to learn how best to reach girls and parents with our USA girl's puberty book!
- Continuing to receive requests from around the world for our many puberty books!

And most important...
transforming girls' & boys' lives!

As the video we did in partnership with Refinery29 & CVSHealth shared:

*"I'd like everyone in the audience to start talking about menstrual health.
It's so incredibly important."*

https://www.instagram.com/reel/C0kCxOqv2TV/?utm_source=ig_embed&utm_campaign=loading

Background

We launched *Grow & Know* in 2010 after the great success of a girl's puberty book project in Tanzania. The Tanzania girl's book received an overwhelmingly positive response from girls and their mothers, aunties, grandmothers, teachers, and even fathers and male peers. Convinced that the Tanzania girl's puberty book, *Growth & Changes (Vipindi Vya Maisha)*, had tapped into an unmet need of girls around the world, *Grow & Know* was established with the aim of replicating the Tanzanian success story for girls and boys in other countries in need of guidance about growing up.

Grow & Know develops books that are grounded in the local social, cultural, and economic context, and that capture the real perspectives of girls and boys growing up today. Young people's written stories are incorporated alongside factual and appropriate guidance about the physical and emotional changes of puberty. Recognizing the importance of authenticity in pictures and language, we work with high quality local illustrators, translators, and publishers in each new country, and each book includes English and the local language, to enhance literacy.

Our Approach

We continue to use a very successful, low budget model to develop each new book (or books) in a country. Our books are never just translated to a new country as that would not lead to sustained uptake. Rather, we first engage with key country stakeholders, and then conduct participatory research with girls and boys to capture their own questions and stories to develop the content of the books. Check out @ www.growandknow.org or @www.agirlsguide.org for more info!

Highlights of Activities in 2023

ETHIOPIA: Finalizing the draft of the boy's puberty book!

Returning to the country after the COVID pandemic and civil disruption paused our participatory research to develop a boy's puberty book in 2020, we partnered with two large non-governmental organizations, Save the Children and CARE, to finish up our activities to develop a boy's book. The spring of 2023 was focused on finishing up the learning with adolescent boys, drafting and field-testing the boy's book, and in the fall of 2023 we engaged with the Ministry of Education, or local government, to submit the book for approval for use in schools. The country remains complicated politically, but the regional bureaus of the education system are now reviewing the book and it's likely we will receive approval in 2024.

As shared by an Ethiopian teacher during field-testing:

"I recommend this book for 9-14 year old boys and girls. Particularly for those living in the rural areas of the country, because they are far from these kinds of open discussions. Hence, if they read, they can gain helpful life lessons."

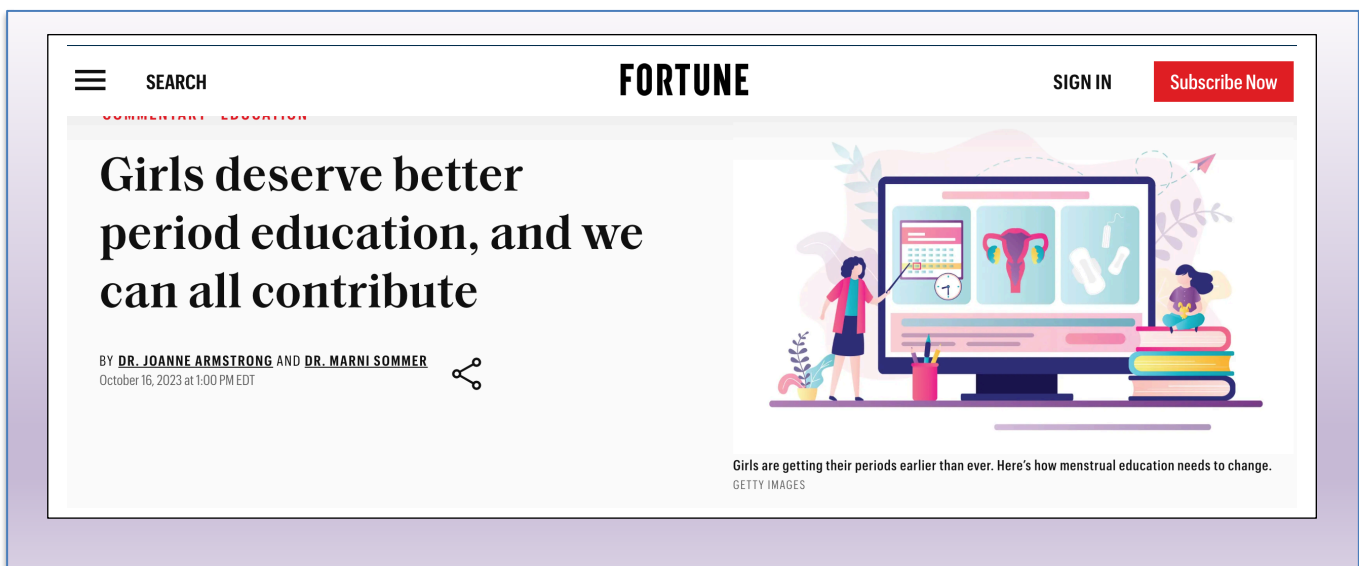
USA: Beginning participatory research to develop a boy's puberty book

In 2023, after seeing such interest in our USA girl's puberty book ("A girl's guide to puberty & periods"), we initiated activities to develop a USA boy's puberty book. This included outreach to identify partners (after school programs, youth-focused non-profits) in three diverse sites across the country: New York City, Cleveland, and the Bay Area, along with developing a survey link for capturing adolescent boys' written growing up stories from states across the country. [More on the USA boy's puberty book in 2024!](#)

USA: Promoting “A girl’s guide to puberty & periods”

In 2022 we launched our USA girl’s puberty book after two years of participatory research with adolescents across the country and the adults in their lives (parents, teachers, coaches, school nurses). We made the decision to self-publish the book so that we could retain editorial control, and so that we could make the book as available as possible, including printing at-cost so there is no profit, and making it more accessible to low-income families, and also to community-based organizations, schools and libraries.

Despite lacking a publishing company and its marketing dollars, by the end of 2023, we were selling 10-20 books a day on Amazon (using their self-publisher division), with more than 10,000 copies sold, and another 3000 copies donated by Grow & Know. We received another boost to sharing our content when CVSHealth asked to partner with us in tandem with their growing national attention to women’s health, and more specifically menstrual health, across the country! This included multiple joint publications in well publicized digital platforms and including [selections of the book’s content on their website](#) next to a “first period box” that they created for early adolescents.



Co-authored article by Dr. Joanne Armstrong (Chief Medical Officer for Women’s Health, CVSHealth) and G&K President Marni Sommer

Conducting learning on book distribution and promoting uptake globally!

We continued to engage in activities to explore how to make a strong case for the importance of puberty education for young people in countries around the world, ranging from conducting an evaluation of the USA girl's puberty book with low-income girls in after school programs in the New York Metropolitan Area (NYC and Connecticut), with findings to be shared in 2024. We also engaged in discussions with the Ethiopian and other national governments around how best to promote teacher uptake of the puberty books in primary or elementary schools.



And although it's taken since early 2020, with lots of unrelated local politics hindering our efforts, we finally received approval from the Kenya Ministry of Education for our Kenya boy's puberty book!

We will now be able to promote uptake of both the girl's and the boy's puberty books in Kenya, and explore opportunities for teacher training with UNICEF and other local partners.

Continued scaling of our existing puberty books!

Although our outreach was limited last year per lower funding levels globally and weakened economies in many of the countries where we have books, we continued to receive requests for orders of book copies, particularly in Kenya, Tanzania and Ethiopia!

Book Distributions

As we have over 2 million girl's and boy's books distributed across 10 countries, it's a lot to list out in the annual report! Detailed numbers available, but our current distributions - for books we have been notified about, because in some countries the publishers just continue to take orders with no need to update us, are estimated to be over 2,200,000 (end of 2023).

**Note: Numbers do not include digital copies.*

Given in-country reports that describe the distribution of the books, we have learned that each copy reaches 5-10 girls and boys. **We guesstimate therefore that we have reached five to ten million girls and boys** through the copies printed and distributed by Grow and Know and our in-country partners.

Projects for 2024

In 2024, we will continue to focus on expanding the distribution of the existing books through on-going advocacy with donors, NGOs and governments, along with continuing to explore new models for delivery, including with teachers. We are exploring doing a book in the Caribbean in partnership with UNICEF and UNESCO, hope to publish copies of our Ethiopia boy's book once it's approved by the government, and will continue our participatory research and development of the USA boy's puberty book.

Financials 2023

Balance January 1, 2023	\$403,188
Cash Income	
Foundations	\$69,566
Board & Advisors	\$15,722
Individuals	\$9,195
Total Income	\$94,483
Expenses	
Research-related fieldwork,	

local illustrators, translators, publishing costs	(\$74,929)
Administrative	(\$6,299)
Total Expenses	(81,228)

2023 Net Income	(\$13,255)	
Balance December 31, 2023		\$415,433

The financials for 2023 are presented on a cash basis. Total revenues raised by *Grow & Know* source are given in the table above. Expenses included the research-related fieldwork and travel of the country team staff developing books in new countries, the costs of local illustrators, translators, and publishing companies in various countries, the President's travel to conduct advocacy for new girl's books and boy's books with donors and governments, and specific administrative costs (e.g. accountant, web support). Revenues raised in 2023 are intended for use in 2024 and expenses related to this revenue and the program activities will fall under *Grow & Know* in 2024.

Grow & Know
...onward to 2024!