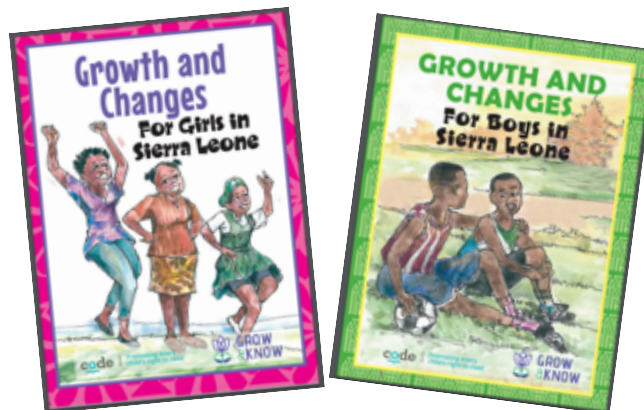




# Annual Report 2022



Photo: Partnering with the Canadian NGO CODE & Columbia University to develop and test a Teacher Training Guide for the puberty books in Sierra Leone



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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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## 2021 Field Teams

Ethiopia:	Allison Carney & Kahsay Sibhat & Mesfin Demissie
Sierra Leone:	Sylvia Marfo, Allie Carney, Mohamed Kabba
USA:	Angela Nguyen & masters students

Website(s):	<a href="http://www.growandknow.org">www.growandknow.org</a>
	<a href="http://www.agirlsguide.org">www.agirlsguide.org</a>

## Introduction

This year was spent returning to the field to pick up where we left off pre-COVID, and conducting projects ranging from in Sierra Leone to the USA in order to build more understanding about the best ways to reach girls and boys (and the adults in their lives) with our puberty books!

### Key accomplishments from 2022 included:

- Returning to Ethiopia to continue our participatory research to develop a boy's puberty book!
- Developing and evaluating the use of a Teacher Training Guide that was distributed with the puberty books in Sierra Leone to 260 schools!
- Launching the Spanish version of the USA girl's puberty book!
- Initiating an evaluation of the USA girl's puberty book with 14 community-based organizations in New York and Connecticut!
- Continuing to receive requests from around the world for our many puberty books!

And most important...

transforming girls' & boys' lives!

As one 9 year old girl said to the evaluation team in Harlem:

*My mom talked to me about the body changes that would happen but it made me very anxious. Now that I've read the book, I don't feel scared anymore. I feel confident about what to expect.*

## 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 and 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* aims to develop 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 both English and the predominant local language, in order to enhance literacy as well.

## 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](http://www.growandknow.org) or @[www.agirlsguide.org](http://www.agirlsguide.org) for more info!

## Highlights of Activities in 2022

### **ETHIOPIA: Returning to continue fieldwork for our boy's book!**

A combination of COVID and political change, including violence, prevented us from returning to continue the participatory research with adolescent boys in two regions of Ethiopia that we stopped in 2020. We initiated a trip to East Africa in August and September 2022 and learned that the Ministry of Education, UNICEF and other local stakeholders were eager for us to return and complete the book. Our partners in this effort in Ethiopia, Save the Children and CARE, also felt it was a good time to return. After a site visit, we concluded that for political reasons, a third site needed to be added, and then the research picked back up enthusiastically with guidance from our two Ethiopian research assistants on this project (Kahsai and Mesfin).

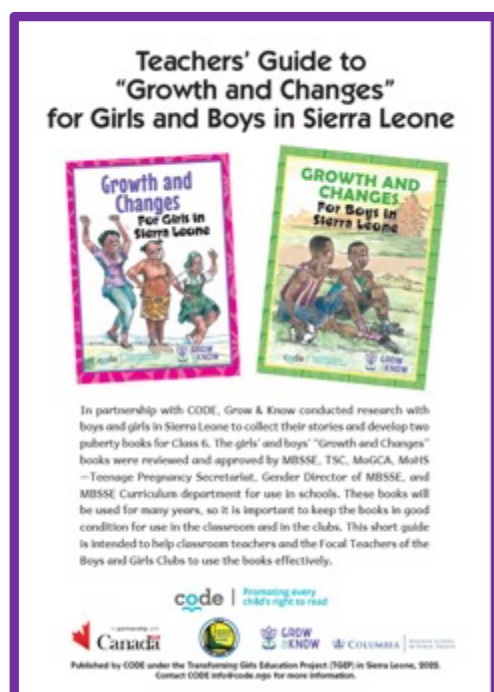


**We are aiming to complete and distribute the Ethiopia boy's puberty book in 2023, along with submitting it to the Ministry of Education for approval!**

## SIERRA LEONE: Teacher Training Guide, Learning & Book Distribution

In 2021 we partnered with CODE, a Canadian NGO, to develop two puberty books simultaneously - one for girls and one for boys in Sierra Leone. We worked with CODE Sierra Leone to develop a modified "COVID friendly" approach to the data collection and supervision from afar, including working with a wonderful four person data collection team (two local women; two local men) to support the capturing of stories (first period, wet dreams/erections, peer pressures, experiences of violence) and puberty questions from boys and girls in Sierra Leone. As always we hired a local illustrator and printer to develop the two books, and the local team field-tested the final version with teachers, parents, girls and boys.

In 2022 as CODE planned the distribution of the books to 260 schools, we developed at their and the government's request, a Teacher Training Guide to explore if such a model might be useful for increasing teacher uptake and use of the books in the classroom or in boy's and girl's clubs, and if it might be a useful model for other countries.



In November 2022 we conducted an assessment of how the puberty books and teacher's guide were received with some wonderful learning:

*"Sometimes the boys will ask the girls questions pertaining to their books. And then the girls will also ask the boys also for them to know more of pertaining the books. It was actually the first time for them to interact with each other in that way."*

## Other country distributions (Kenya!)

Although we completed our Kenya girl's puberty book in 2019, it's taken a few years to get approval from the Kenyan Government. It's finally happened! We have also been sharing copies of our girl's book with small non-governmental organizations who requested copies. Below is from a group who distributed some books in Maralal, Kenya.



And sharing a good small donor request from this non-governmental organization in case as an example - and offer - of how the content can be supported further!

"The 80 girls we are training in the school club are going to be given a chance to start clubs in their home villages which are rural villages all over Samburu County - one of the most rural in Kenya where beading, FGM, and forced child marriage are still the norm. The clubs cover a lot of different topics. Our goal isn't education on the issues but raising the confidence of girls and turning them from victims to problem solvers. We're trying to raise up the next generation of changemakers. For each meeting they run we will contribute Ksh 1,000 (about \$7.50) towards their school fees. This will not only spread the clubs to a broad unreached area, but it will help our girls stay in school and avoid child marriage themselves.

I would LOVE to distribute your book at all of these clubs, but we are going to struggle to fund the clubs themselves. If you happen to know a donor who might be interested in partnering with us - perhaps contributing half the cost of the books while we contribute the other half - we would be VERY interested. The books are a wonderful addition to our curriculum."

The Kenya boy's book continues to work its way through the curriculum department's review system (we've been pushing for it since early 2020).

## USA...and "A Girl's Guide to Puberty and Periods"!

In 2018 we initiated participatory research in the USA with low-income girls across the country, including focused data collection in the largest most diverse cities (Chicago, Los Angeles, New York City), and capturing [first period stories from adolescent girls in 25 different states](#)! We decided to self-publish the book so that we could retain editorial control of the text, graphic design and illustrations, and so that we could make the book as available as possible, including printing at-cost so there is no profit and it's most accessible to parents, community-based organizations, schools and libraries.



The book was launched in January 2022 and although we lack the marketing machine of a giant publisher, the public relations / marketing / google grant promotion that we spent time on - along with outreach to over a hundred youth-focused organizations - led to wonderful initial uptake and interest.

Please see this [link](#) for an illustrative list of the wonderful podcast and press uptake that we received in 2022!

By late 2022 we were selling about 10-20 copies on amazon/day and that number is increasing (to be reported in the 2023 report!). And although this is also 2023 news (!!)

the book was recently highlighted in a piece about the new Judy Blume movies on Netflix and in theaters!



## Are you there book lovers? It's me, Margaret.

What makes a young adult novel that deals honestly with puberty endure across generations of women?

April 20, 2023

By Kendra Nordin Beato Staff writer

The one place where Angela Nguyen could spend unlimited time as a child growing up in Seattle was the library. She devoured books, especially coming-of-age stories. It was there, in the young adult section, where she encountered a book her middle school friends had been telling her about: "Are You There God? It's Me, Margaret," by Judy Blume.

"I didn't know what it was before I read it. I thought it was going to be a religious book, to be honest. ... But I had friends who read it and said, 'Oh, you should read this,'" says Dr. Nguyen, recalling schoolyard chatter from two decades ago. "It's got girl stuff."

Judy Blume has been giving tween girls something to talk about ever since "Are You There God? It's Me, Margaret" was published in 1970. Her iconic novel has been celebrated as a relatable guide for adolescent girls as much as it has been banned for its matter-of-fact discussions of menstruation. A new generation will get its chance to meet Margaret this month, when a big-screen version (rated PG-13) arrives April 28.

Check out this [link](#) for the full article which mentions the book!

### 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 Tanzania and Ethiopia!

### Book Distributions

As we have over 2 million girl's and boy's books now 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 2,198,084 (end of 2022).

*\*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 2023

In 2023, 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 Democratic Republic of Congo, and are currently conducting an evaluation of our USA girl's puberty book with youth-focused organizations in New York and Connecticut.

## Financials 2022

<b>Balance January 1, 2022</b>		<b>\$392,439</b>
<b>Cash Income</b>		
Foundations	\$45,500	
Board & Advisors	\$12,000	
Individuals	\$19,954	
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>\$76,954</b>	
<b>Expenses</b>		
Travel	(\$245)	
Research-related fieldwork, local illustrators, translators, publishing costs	(\$59,657)	
Administrative	(\$6303)	
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>(66,205)</b>	
<b>2022 Net Income</b>	<b>(\$10,749)</b>	
<b>Balance December 31, 2022</b>		<b>\$403,188</b>

The financials for 2022 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 2022 are intended for use in 2023 and expenses related to this revenue and the program activities will fall under *Grow & Know* in 2023.

**Grow & Know**  
**...onward to 2023!**