

Empowering Youth to Transform Their Future



Open Hearts Big Dreams

Frequently Asked Questions

What is “Open Hearts Big Dreams”?

Open Hearts Big Dreams (OHBD) is a Seattle-based, 501(c)(3) not-for-profit organization dedicated to meeting the challenge of increasing literacy, inclusion, innovation readiness, and leadership skills in Ethiopia and beyond.

OpenHeartsBigDreams.org

What is OHBD’s Mission?

OHBD’s mission is to inspire, empower, and enable youth in Ethiopia to reimagine their future through increasing literacy, innovation, leadership, and inclusion.

What are OHBD Ready Set Go (RSG) Books?

OHBD-RSG Books is a literacy as well as language and culture preservation program. Program staff and volunteers write, illustrate, translate, publish, and locally print culturally appropriate books and distribute them to readers in Ethiopia and around the world.

Why are programs like this so important?

- When children read stories in their mother tongue, especially when that language is underrepresented in their larger culture, they feel comforted and valued.
- Books promote cognitive development. More books offer more opportunities to practice core skills like thinking, remembering, reasoning, and concentration. They also help children deduce and infer, develop creativity, and practice empathy.
- Reading changes lives. Reading promotes a deeper understanding of the world and enhances bonding between children and adults.
- Stories about the impact of OHBD’s work are available via the blog on their website.

Where are the books printed?

Books distributed in Ethiopia are printed in Ethiopia to build capacity and to make them more affordable for schools and libraries in that country. Globally, these books are available through print on demand, and all book sales support the donation of more books in Ethiopia.

How many books has the Ready Set Go Books program published?

The rapidly growing list includes 160+ books in seventeen languages with more in progress. With support, more than 360,000 books have been printed and distributed in Ethiopia.

In what languages are the OHBD-RSG Books available?

OHBD has created books in the following languages: Amharic, Tigrinya, Afaan Oromo, Somali, Anuak, Wolayta Doonaa, Dizin, Tambarasa, Sidama, Kiswahili, Igbo, Spanish, Greek, Arabic, English, Portuguese, German and French, with more languages planned.

Where can people find OHBD-RSG Books?

Ready Set Go Books are available at Bookshop.org, Amazon.com, WalMart.com, Target.com, Barnes & Noble, Sodere Store, and wherever books are sold. They are available in libraries in Ethiopia, Europe, and the U.S. You can find a complete catalog at their books website: <https://ohbd-rsgbooks.com/>

What are some other OHBD accomplishments?

- Establishment of three model libraries for children in Ethiopia.
- Establishment of a model STEM lab that emphasizes creative problem solving and entrepreneurial leadership skills for youth in Ethiopia.
- Creation of three STEM Lab Manuals in Chemistry, Physics, and Biology to support educators in Ethiopia.
- Establishment of pilot projects to train youth in entrepreneurship and computer science. In cooperation with the U.S. Embassy in Ethiopia, Debre Tabor University and others, OHBD provides computer literacy classes to youth in Ethiopia.
- OHBD provides writing support for new authors and an artist-in-residence program.
- OHBD supports equal opportunities for children with disabilities through the Mike Carr Legacy Project. This project is named for a valued member of the OHBD community, an advocate for inclusion of those with different abilities. As part of this project, OHBD has launched a series of books that features kids and adults with different abilities.

What recognition has OHBD received?

- IBBY-iRead Outstanding Reading Promoter Award, 2022, given to Jane Kurtz, the Creative Director of OHBD-RSG Books
- GuideStar Platinum Seal for transparency
- Top NGO by Charity Navigator designation (95 out of 100 points)
- Gourmand Awards “Best in the World”: *Letter from a Plow Nation* and *My Five Senses*
- Book Riot’s “19 Best Ethiopian Books”: *Andromeda*, *Princess of Ethiopia* and *Letter from a Plow Nation*
- Our Ancestories’ “A Short List of 20 Good Ethiopian Children’s Books” *Andromeda*, *Princess of Ethiopia*, *Trouble*, *Runaway Injera*, *Thirteen Months of Sanshins* and *Letter from a Plow Nation*

How did OHBD get started?

In 2011, Ellenore Angelidis created OHBD as a volunteer organization to help raise the funds for a library in Bahir Dar, Ethiopia, the birthplace of her daughter, in cooperation with Ethiopia Reads. Upon visiting the library in person, Ellenore was moved by a powerful sense of potential for positive change. The scope of her projects quickly grew from fundraising to book publication and STEAM programs.

Why is the need for these books so great in Ethiopia?

Ethiopia needs more children's books. This nation of 115 million does not have a history of publishing simple, colorful books that are easily accessible to children. Paper is expensive, disposable incomes are small, distribution is uneven, and schools and libraries do not underwrite the sale of children's books as they do in other countries. Plus, in a nation with more than eighty local languages, it's logistically complex to create and share books in every child's heart language.

Does OHBD have a board?

OHBD is supported by a Board of Directors which provides overall strategic direction, an Advisory Board to broaden their decision-making, and a Junior Board, which provides a youth perspective. People can learn more about individual board members at the OHBD website.

How can people help OHBD continue their important work?

- Buy OHBD RSG Books: with each title purchased, OHBD provides a free book for a child in Ethiopia.
- Run a fundraiser for an OHBD project.
- Volunteer for a STEAM or literacy project.
- Make a donation.
- Ask the school, library, or organization they're involved in to carry OHBD books. Discounts are available for bulk purchases.
- Leave a review wherever they purchase OHBD books.

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