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PRESS RELEASE

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New Reading Research Center at Bayero University, Kano Will Make Better Readers of Nigerian Students *Partnership with Florida State University supported by USAID grant*

Kano – Officials from Nigeria’s Bayero University, Kano (BUK), and the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), today inaugurated the new Nigeria Center for Reading and Research Development at BUK that will ensure teachers are equipped with techniques to improve reading outcomes across the country for years and generations to come.

The Center is the first of its kind in Nigeria and will serve as a focal point for expertise that educators at every level can access to help bring about positive change in early reading skills. The Center will be relocated to a new home at BUK under construction and funded by a ₦255.5 million commitment from Nigeria’s Government.

“Everyone here has a passion for education and high hopes for its future in Nigeria,” USAID Deputy Education Office Director Elice Elegbe said. “In that spirit, the new Center for Reading Research and Development will play a critical role in ensuring the next generation of Nigerian children is equipped with strong reading skills as the basis for a lifetime of learning.”

The Center was conceived and designed under a \$1 million USAID grant that established a partnership between BUK and Florida State University (FSU). To ensure that it is staffed by scholars equipped with the latest ideas in educational development, the grant supported sending six Bayero faculty fellows to participate in residencies at Florida State’s Center for Reading Research.

FSU is also training additional BUK faculty to deliver courses on early grade reading instruction and learning to pre-service primary grade teachers. Faculty fellows will also undertake collaborative research on early grade reading and develop postgraduate diploma and master's degree programs for Nigerian educators.

One concept the Center will embrace is to develop reading curricula in local languages before starting to teach in English. Research shows that a child who starts to read in a language he or she understands will be better equipped to take on learning a foreign language in later grades, and ultimately get more out of his or her education.

Over the past three years, USAID has embraced this concept, distributing more than three million books and teacher's guides for early grade reading in Hausa and English in northern Nigeria. Similar materials are being developed in Igbo and Yoruba to be deployed later this year.

“Education matters,” Elegbe said. “Today’s children are the future of Nigeria, and education is the future of Nigeria’s children.”

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