



United States Diplomatic Mission to Nigeria, Public Affairs Section
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PRESS RELEASE

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USAID Distributes Nine Million Books to 7,900 Schools in Sokoto and Bauchi

Abuja -- On May 18, 2021, the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) concluded its five-year education flagship activity -- the Northern Education Initiative Plus (NEI Plus) that introduced a new local language early grade reading approach that was adopted by six Nigerian states.

Implemented in close partnership with Bauchi and Sokoto states, and in collaboration with major local, state, federal, and international education establishments, NEI Plus increased access to basic education to over 269,000 out-of-school children -- half of whom are girls -- and improved reading outcomes for close to a million children in Bauchi and Sokoto states.

“Learning must start with reading,” USAID Education Office Director Denise O’Toole said at the closing. “Teaching children to read in a language they understand gives them a powerful tool for lifelong learning. This will contribute to developing a new generation of leaders equipped to help Nigeria meet the challenges ahead.”

Because of the critical role of reading in human development, USAID supported Nigeria through NEI Plus to develop and distribute more than nine million teaching and learning materials for early grade reading to 2,300 schools and 5,600 non-formal learning centers across both Bauchi and Sokoto.

“I commend all these laudable achievements and reiterate that the Federal Government of Nigeria through the Federal Ministry of Education will continue to partner with USAID to provide basic education services that promote self-reliance,” Honorable Minister of State for Education, Emeka Nwajiuba said at the

close-out meeting in Abuja. “We are ready to consolidate and sustain the gains made by USAID’s NEI Plus activity.

Piloted in the northern states in Hausa, the materials designed for Primary levels 1 to 3 were expanded to include Igbo and Yoruba versions for schools in the South, as well as English. Over five years, Bauchi and Sokoto states invested more than \$3.8 million (N1.6 billion) to expand the approach to all local government areas in the two states.

USAID has also helped train over 9,600 teachers in early grade reading and created a pool of Nigerian reading experts with capacity to train more teachers. Under the activity, 200 new community reading centers and 800 reading corners opened in the two states.

These efforts have increased reading instructional time and opportunities for about one million children, and can potentially reach millions more children if sustained and scaled up across the country.

USAID also recently assisted Nigeria to develop a National Reading Framework that sets common goals for reading standards and measurements to improve reading instruction. To build on these gains, O’Toole said, individuals and organizations with a stake in Nigeria’s education, as well as parents and local communities, must ensure that improved reading outcomes remain their top priorities and focus.

While NEI Plus is coming to a close, USAID’s support for primary education and early grade reading is not. New activities in the planning stage will help consolidate and scale up the progress made in Bauchi and Sokoto in other parts of the country.

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PHOTO CAPTION: In the middle: Minister of Education for State, Honourable Emeka Nwajiuba acknowledging the presentation from Aminatu Ammar a pupil and beneficiary of the NEI Plus activity at the close-out ceremony in Abuja. Flanked by Denise O'Toole, USAID Education Office Director and Nurudeen Lawal, NEI Plus Chief of Party and Lydia Onuoha, Deputy Chief of Party.