



9.27.2017



Ahmad Alhaji Umar is the Director, School Services, Bauchi State Ministry of Education who participated in a workshop to develop standards and benchmarks for the Let's Read! Mu Karanta! program.

What do you think of the Let's Read! Mu Karanta! program implemented under the Northern Education Initiative Plus in Bauchi state?

The program is a modern method that has been introduced to teach children to read with understanding in Hausa and English languages. I like the gradual release method of "I do, you do, we do" as it encourages interactive learning. It gives room for pupils to participate effectively in the lessons and then there is also the teachers guides that allow teachers plan their lessons which was not there before.

Since you are involved in school services what improvements have you seen with

teaching and learning?

Really, there are improvements because a lot of the children that are part of the program can now read with understanding. On the part of the teachers, they have really benefitted from the trainings and their attitude and composure in the classroom has improved. They now teach with the consciousness that it is about the students and not themselves. This is why parents are pleased with these improvements and there is an increase in student population in schools.

So all of these improvements are not sustainable without financing and policy. What's your view on the standards and benchmarks being developed for early grade reading?

The benchmarks help us to assess ourselves on whether or not we are improving reading outcomes and lets us understand what every child in each grade should have learnt by the end of the term. The Early Grade Reading Assessment has provided data to tell us where we are but now we want to know what success will look like for every child across grades. This will help us as a ministry to ask schools and teachers questions when we feel like they are not meeting up and also commend those that have met them. The benchmarks are very important because it gives us a blueprint showing where we are supposed to be.

So in what way will the Ministry of

Education find them useful?

We will need it because it will help us in our monitoring and evaluation. It will help us to know really whether we are providing all it takes to help schools meet these benchmarks. Government will be able to check itself especially with the provision of teaching and learning materials, remuneration for school staff and teachers will be checked on school attendance and methodology and the pupils also will be checked on performance. So a lot of benefits will be derived from this process.

Is this something new for Bauchi state?

This is definitely a first for us in the state. I am particularly pleased because we are very realistic in our targets as the data is there to guide us. We do not want to set benchmarks that are not attainable considering the myriad of challenges confronting the education sector.

Fun Fact

"Facebook Addiction Disorder" is a mental disorder identified by psychologists.

The Initiative Weekly



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Highlights of the Week

- Advocated for increased budgetary allocation to basic education and sustainability of the Northern Education Initiative Plus activities within the framework of the Memorandum of Understanding at a roundtable discussion in Abuja with high level education and finance stakeholders from the Sokoto Ministry of Education, State Universal Basic Education Board, Ministry of Budget and Planning, Ministry of Finance and the State House of Assembly.
- Developed standards and benchmarks to track and measure performance of students and teachers on the *Let's Read! Mu Karanta!* program with key federal and state education stakeholders at a week-long workshop in Abuja.
- Teaching and learning in 1,400 Non Formal Learning Centers have resumed fully after enrollment of learners and training of learning facilitators to deliver the curriculum and mentor facilitators for coaching and mentoring.
- Trained Civil Society Organizations on data and records management in Bauchi state. The training included use of tablets for improved data collection and reporting on programmatic activities.
- Met with the Monitoring, Evaluation, Assessment and Research technical working group to review project targets for second year and strategize for the third year.
- The technical working group is also supporting the distribution of teaching and learning materials to children enrolled on 1,400 Non-Formal Learning Centers in Bauchi and Sokoto states.
- Oriented Civil Society Organizations managing Non-Formal Learning Centers on guidelines for vocational skill acquisitions and apprenticeship to provide opportunities for adolescent girls and boys to become self-reliant.
- Systems for learning facilitators to report level of effort for payment of stipends through mobile technology strengthened via trainings in Bauchi and Sokoto states.
- Reviewed financial and progress report for the Reading Association of Nigeria, a major grantee mobilizing communities to support reading, in preparation for closeout and award of a new grant in third year.



The *Let's Read! Mu Karanta!* program encourages teachers to use pointers during lessons making them slow down and produce sounds from words as they read so the children can follow.

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Regards from,

Northern Education Initiative Plus

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