Early Grade Reading (EGR) Pilot Project

End-of-Project & EGRA Endline
SUMMARY REPORT

Ebonyi | Plateau | Sokoto

August 2025

LEARNOVATE Foundational Learning
Improvement Programme (FLIP)

Early Grade Reading (EGR) Pilot Project

End-of-Project & EGRA Endline Report

Ebonyi, Plateau and Sokoto States

August 2025

QEDA

Foundation

Content

1. Introduction

The LEARNOVATE Foundational Learning Improvement Programme (LEARNOVATE–FLIP) is an initiative of the Oando Foundation. The programme is implemented in partnership with state and local education authorities and stakeholders to support governments' efforts at improving learning outcomes at the basic education level. It was launched in 2024 and is rooted in Oando Foundation's broader LEARNOVATE strategy, which focuses on:

- LEARN: fostering basic skills mastery (foundational literacy and numeracy) and STEAM

- PLANET: promoting green skills for the emerging global workforce through environmental education and innovation grants

- ADVOCACY: championing thought leadership and influencing policy reforms in education

LEARNOVATE FLIP aims to improve literacy and numeracy skills among primary school children through two models:

- **Early Grade Reading (EGR):** implemented in Ebonyi, Plateau and Sokoto States to improve foundational reading skills among Primary 1-3 pupils, using mother-tongue instruction.

- **Teaching at the Right Level (TaRL):** deployed in Adamawa State to provide remedial literacy and numeracy support for Primary 4-6 pupils, especially those with interrupted learning.

This summary report focuses on the EGR pilot project. It highlights the project's activities, results, challenges, and lessons learned, including the findings of the Early Grade Reading Assessment (EGRA) conducted by the project in Ebonyi, Plateau and Sokoto states.

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EGR Pilot Project: Key Facts & Figures

Project Aim & Scope

To improve foundational reading skills among Primary 1-3 pupils, using mother-tongue instruction

3 states (Ebonyi, Plateau & Sokoto)

6 LGAs (2 per state)

60 public primary schools (20 per state)

School-based Results

312 teachers trained

110 head teachers, SSOs, administrators trained

19,292 teaching and learning materials (TLMs) and **21,600** supplementary reading materials (TRMs) provided

Community - based Results

60 school committees (SBMCs) activated

1,140 SBMC members mentored

120 community reading hubs (CRHs) established serving 10,800 learners

Community - School Results

5,162 out-of-school children re-enrolled into formal education; **2,000** provided with back-to-school materials

42,885 students sensitized on personal and environmental hygiene, GBV, and safety during crises

Research Results

Evidence of positive learning growth in early grade reading proficiency based on strategic, context-sensitive interventions. Study results highlight the success of addressing disparities by gender, age, socio-economic status, and language of instruction.

2. Project Goal

Problem

In Nigeria, a significant proportion of children leave early primary school without acquiring foundational literacy skills, especially in underserved and conflict-affected areas. Studies show that pupils who fail to read fluently by the end of Primary 3 often continue to struggle academically.

These gaps are more pronounced in rural, underserved, and conflict-affected areas, where resources are limited, teacher capacity is low, and community engagement is weak.

In response to these challenges, Oando Foundation piloted the LEARNOVATE–FLIP Early Grade Reading project in Ebonyi, Plateau and Sokoto states to demonstrate workable solutions that can be modelled across the country and similar settings.
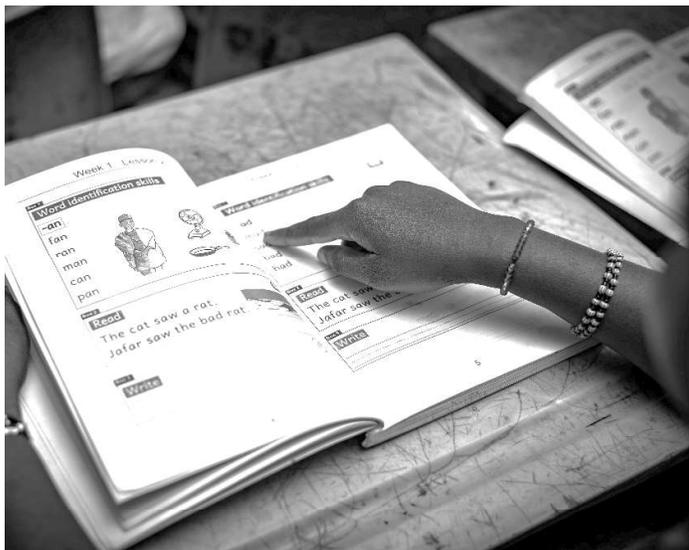
Goal

The overarching goal of the LEARNOVATE–FLIP Early Grade Reading project is to significantly improve foundational literacy outcomes for children in the early grades of primary school across the three pilot states of Ebonyi, Plateau and Sokoto within one academic year, using mother-tongue instruction.

The project aimed to demonstrate a scalable, community-led, and cost-effective model in response to Nigeria's foundational literacy crisis. By focusing on the foundational years of learning, the project aimed to build a strong academic base for children and reduce the number of learners who transit to higher grades without being able to read.

This goal is rooted in the understanding that early reading skills form the basis for all future learning and are essential to breaking the cycle of poverty and exclusion for children in underserved communities.

Moreover, the project responded to global and national education priorities, including Sustainable Development Goal 4 (ensure inclusive and equitable quality education) and Nigeria's National Policy on Education – both of which emphasise equitable access to quality learning and the need to address learning poverty.

3. Approach

The EGR pilot project adopted an integrated approach comprising interventions such as:

- Teacher Capacity Enhancement
- Deployment of Teaching and Learning Materials (TLMs)
- Community Engagement and Advocacy
- Tech-enabled School Monitoring and Mentoring
- Diagnostics Assessments

Special attention was given to ensuring that the interventions and activities were gender sensitive, contextually relevant, and adaptive to local challenges such as insecurity and poverty.

Scope

The LEARNOVATE FLIP EGR project was implemented in Ebonyi, Plateau and Sokoto states. It targeted **60 public primary schools** (20 per state) across **six LGAs** (two per state). The LGAs were selected based on a combination of education need, strategic location, and willingness of local authorities to collaborate. The selected schools serve largely rural, low-income populations.

Ebonyi	Plateau	Sokoto
• Abakaliki LGA • Ikwo LGA	• Jos North LGA • Mangu LGA	• Shagari LGA • Wammako LGA

Key Partners and Stakeholders

Implementation of the EGR project was led by Quality Education Development Associates (QEDA) and Hilltrust Top Foundation (HTF) in collaboration with the State Universal Basic Education Boards (SUBEBs) in the three states. Other key stakeholders included Local Government Education Authorities (LGEAs), traditional and religious leaders, Parent Teacher Associations (PTAs), Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), Community Based Organizations (CBOs), and school staff. These partnerships enabled smooth programme rollout, ensured state-level buy in, and fostered collaboration across multiple governance tiers.

Through a co-design and co-implementation approach, all partners were actively involved in planning, implementation and monitoring activities.

4. Key Activities & Results

The LEARNOVATE-FLIP Early Grade Reading pilot project planned and implemented a series of interventions and activities designed to improve foundational literacy in supported schools. The main areas of interventions include Teacher Capacity Enhancement, TLM Development and Deployment, School Monitoring and Mentoring, Community Engagement and Advocacy, and Diagnostics Assessments.

Each component represents a strategic pillar necessary for foundational learning transformation. They combine to show that a strategic, community-driven, and evidence-based intervention, delivered through public education systems and in partnership with local actors, could lead to measurable improvements in reading proficiency among Primary 1 to 3 learners.

A. Teacher Capacity Enhancement

Teacher support was a critical thematic area through which the project incorporated professional development for early-grade teachers. The project provided intensive training and mentoring to early grade teachers and head teachers from the participating schools, equipping them with child-cantered, evidence-based pedagogical approaches for reading instruction.

The training sessions enhanced teachers' competencies in using mother-tongue instructional materials, applying phonics-based approaches, and conducting formative assessments. The support also empowered the teachers with skills in child safeguarding, inclusive teaching techniques, and social-emotional learning (SEL) approaches.

A total of 312 individual teachers and head teachers (209 females and 86 males) benefitted from the EGR training across Ebonyi, Plateau, and Sokoto states. One hundred and twelve (112) female teachers, coaches and school administrators were upskilled in the separate training on gender-sensitive instruction and SEL approaches.

B. TLM Development & Deployment

The project supported the design, production, and distribution of teaching and learning materials needed for making reading lessons more engaging, interactive, and easier to understand.

The resources include Teacher's Guides and Pupils' Books. The project ensure that each target school received materials in appropriate languages for their teachers and pupils. Materials in Igbo and Hausa were deployed in Ebonyi and Sokoto respectively, while English was used in Plateau to allow for comparative research on language-of-instruction impacts.

A total of **19,262 TLMs** were distributed across Ebonyi, Plateau and Sokoto states. Distribution ceremonies were conducted at the SUBEB and LGEA levels, where the TLMs were handed over to education authorities and community representatives, and at the school-level where SBMCs and community leaders witnessed the handover of the materials to teachers and learners.

In addition, the project ensured the

delivery of Supplementary Reading Materials (SRMs), including levelled readers, decodable texts, and phonics charts. These resources were designed to strengthen foundational reading skills and enhance instruction in both classroom and community hub settings.

The supplementary materials enabled learners to independently read and comprehend simple texts, contributing to improved literacy fluency and learner confidence. Teachers reported using SRMs regularly typically twice per week making reading sessions more engaging, interactive, and learner-cantered. The integration of SRMs into lesson delivery also supported differentiated instruction and promoted a stronger reading culture.

A total of **21,600 copies of SRMs** were distributed across all participating schools and reading hubs across the three states.

C. Strengthening School Supportive Supervision

The Early Grade Reading project also organised transformative coaching and mentoring for **112 school support officers (SSOs), head teachers, and education administrator**. This intervention was necessary to institutionalise Teacher Learning Circles (TLCs) and Cluster Learning Cycles (CLCs) as peer-support mechanisms for improving EGR instruction. These mechanisms helped establish a mentoring and supportive supervision system in which experienced educators provide support to less experienced teachers, fostering a collaborative learning environment.

D. Community Engagement and Advocacy

A series of activities were planned and executed towards ensuring increased involvement and participation of community-based education stakeholders in foundational literacy. The activities include inception meetings and sensitization sessions with community leaders and members, and capacity building for community stakeholders to cultivate local ownership. Activation and restructuring of School-Based Management Committees (SBMCs), establishment of Community Reading Hubs, enrolment drives for out-of-school children were also parts of the community engagement and advocacy activities.

i.   SBMC Activation and Restructuring

The **SBMCs of all 60** supported-schools were activated and restructured to enable the committees be actively involved in school improvement processes. By activating the SBMCs, the project helped in making the committees effectively play critical oversight, advocacy, and resource mobilisation roles, including in enrolling learners in schools and community hubs and encouraging them to make reading a culture. **One thousand and one hundred forty (1,140) SBMC members were** mentored during the activation and restructuring of the committees across the three states.

Following targeted support, 22 SBMCs reached full functionality (36.7% improvement); 78% took measures to improve access to clean water and hygiene facilities in their schools; 87% of the committees instituted actions to prevent school-related gender-based violence (SRGBV); while 98% implemented child protection strategies during emergencies, particularly in communities affected by conflict or displacement.

However, interventions around climate change adaptation remained limited, with only 57% of SBMCs taking actions such as tree planting or raising awareness on environmental issues, indicating a need for increased advocacy and capacity building in this domain.

ii.   Establishment of Community Reading Hubs (CRHs)

One hundred and twenty (120) hubs were established across the six LGAs (20 per LGA) as safe spaces where children, parents, and community volunteers can engage in structured reading activities outside school hours. The CRHs operated twice weekly, offering young learners with opportunities for storytelling and peer reading sessions.

The project assisted **60 facilitators** with the necessary skills to engage children in extracurricular reading activities and supported the hubs with mats, boards, and other teaching and learning materials.

The 120 hubs across the three states recorded a cumulative attendance of **10,800 learners**, surpassing the target of 8,400 learners (estimated at 70 learners per CRH) by 22%.

iii.   Enrolment Drive

To address the issue of exclusion and inequality in education, the project actively identified, engaged, and re-enrolled out-of-school children, particularly those facing social, cultural, or economic barriers. Particular focus was placed on reaching marginalized learners including girls, children with disabilities, nomadic children, and those from ethnic minority backgrounds.

SBMCs were supported to identify, advocate for, and enrol such learners into schools and reading hubs. Through sensitization campaigns, direct engagement with families, and community-led initiatives, the project facilitated the return of **5,162 children** to formal learning environments.

To support their learning journey, the OOSC were provided with teaching and learning materials, ensuring they had the necessary resources to engage effectively in classroom instruction. Back-to-school materials (school uniforms and sandals; bags and writing sets) were also provided for **2,000 enrolled OOSC** to help retain them as these were the needs highlighted as deterring factor for their enrolment in schools.

iv.   School Orientation

School orientation is crucial for informing learners about issues and activities that affect them. Clear and accessible information stimulates dialogue and helps students understand and respond to concerns. Effective learner engagement starts with this, empowering people to make informed decisions and actively improve their well-being.

Hence, the project facilitated school orientation across the 60 schools, enhancing the knowledge of learners and eliciting their actions on personal and environmental hygiene, reporting pathways for school-related gender-based violence, and safety during educational crises. The school orientation reached **42,885 students** across the three states.
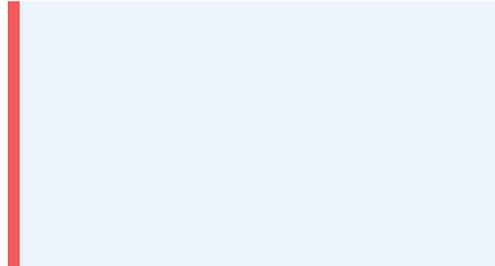
E. Data Management Strengthening

The project worked with relevant stakeholders to develop and deploy tech-based Monitoring and Mentoring (M&M) tools to track teacher/pupil attendance, CRH usage, learner performance, and inclusive participation.

Open Data Kit (ODK) was adopted for real-time monitoring. Tools such as the SBMC Functionality Tool was introduced for real-time tracking of SBMC effectiveness while the Classroom Observation Checklists was used to assess learner performance and teacher instruction quality. The real-time digital monitoring value as a replicable model for foundational learning improvement in Nigeria.

F. Comparative Studies / Diagnostic Assessments

Early Grade Reading Assessment (EGRA)

The Early Grade Reading Assessment was conducted to measure learning achievement and to explore how gender, age, and socio-economic status (SES) influence reading outcomes across different linguistic and geographic contexts.

Data was collected through the EGRA administered to learners in Primary 2 in selected primary schools across the three focus states. Key reading subskills including letter-sound identification, familiar word reading, oral reading fluency, and reading comprehension were assessed.

The sampling frame was drawn from schools participating in the project. In each of the three states, 10 schools were selected from two LGAs, making a total of 20 schools per state. Within each school, a purposive sampling technique was used to select seven Primary 2 pupils. This approach led to a total sample size of **420 learners** across the three states.

i.   Learning Achievements

Ebonyi demonstrated exceptional progress in reading fluency benchmarks. The percentage of learners 'Below Partially Meets Minimum Proficiency' (0-17 CWPM) dramatically dropped from 72.3% at baseline to just 4.0% at endline. This massive reduction in the lowest category is directly reflected in significant increases across higher proficiency levels.

Plateau showed very strong improvement. The percentage of learners 'Below Partially Meets Minimum Proficiency' (0-17 CWPM) significantly decreased from 88.7% at baseline to 17.0% at endline.

Table 1: Percentage of Learners in Various Reading Proficiency Levels

Class Definition	CWPM	Ebonyi (Igbo)		Plateau (English)		Sokoto (Hausa)	
		Baseline	Endline	Baseline	Endline	Baseline	Endone
Below Partially Meets Minimum Proficiency	0-17	72.3	4.0	88.7	17.0	83.2	87.3
Partially Meets Minimum Proficiency	18-35	10.9	30.2	8.5	38.5	7.9	10.0
Meets Minimum Proficiency	36-59	16.1	64.3	2.1	40.0	8.9	2.7
Exceeds Minimum Proficiency	60+	0.7	1.6	0.7	4.4	0.0	0.0
Total		100		100		100	

Source: Endline EGRA Study

However, Hausa-language results in Sokoto displayed slower progress compared to Igbo and English counterparts. This may reflect broader contextual challenges in Hausa literacy

instruction, including, classroom exposure, and learners' home literacy environments. Such systemic factors may have influenced outcomes independently of project interventions.

ii.   Gender Differences

The endline data shows that significant learning gains were made by both male and female learners across all three states, with a large number of both genders moving into higher proficiency bands. Taken together, the baseline data suggested that female learners generally exhibited stronger reading fluency than their male counterparts, particularly in the Igbo and Hausa language groups. While girls had a baseline advantage, both genders ended with impressive average scores, and males slightly outperformed females in some states. These findings suggest that the interventions have been successful in narrowing the initial gender gap, and that continued gender-responsive strategies are key to sustaining these equitable outcomes.

Table 2: Average Score in Various Reading Subtasks by Gender

Period	Matric	Ebonyi		Plateau		Sokoto	
		Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Baseline	CLPM	29	42	24	27	9	13
	CSPM	13	20			6	10
	CWPM	13	18	8	7	3	9
Endline	CLPM	49	54	53	52	16	12
	CSPM	27	33			13	11
	CWPM	36	36	34	34	8	8

Source: Endline Study 2025

iii.   Age and Literacy Performance Differences

The relationship between age and literacy performance followed a positive pattern at endline. Learners in the typical early reading age group (6-8 years) demonstrated the most significant improvements and highest average scores. However, older learners (9-11 and 12+ years) also showed remarkable learning growth, with substantial increases in their average scores across all reading subskills. This indicates that while early intervention is crucial, age-appropriate catch-up programs for older learners have been effective in improving their foundational reading skills.

Table 3: Average Score in Various Reading Subtasks by Age

Period	Matric/Age	6-8	9-11	12+
Baseline	CLPM	27	24	32
	CSPM	13	14	3
	CWPM	12	9	12
Endline	CLPM	36	38	49
	CSPM	18	18	23
	CWPM	23	26	32

Source: Endline EGRA Study 2025

iv.   Socio-Economic Status

The endline data shows positive progress across all socio-economic status (SES) groups. While initial findings were nuanced, the endline results demonstrate that learners from all SES categories benefited from the interventions. However, a significant proportion of learners from the lowest SES quintile still require targeted support to reach higher proficiency levels, underscoring the need for continued investment in equity-based strategies. Notably, girls and learners from low-income households demonstrated strong literacy gains, reflecting the impact of targeted, gender-sensitive, and community-led interventions. Overall, the findings challenge the common assumption that higher SES automatically correlates with better literacy performance.

Table 4: Average Score in Various Reading Subtasks by SES

Period	Matric/SES	0	1-3	4-6	7-9	10+
Baseline	CLPM	44	27	23	24	10
	CSPM	5	14	13	11	3
	CWPM	18	10	9	11	4
Baseline	CLPM	27	29	41	46	38
	CSPM	9	15	21	17	24
	CWPM	13	19	28	28	26

Source: Endline EGRA Study 2025

v.   Language and Location Effects

A critical and innovative aspect of the project was its comparative research design, which evaluated the effectiveness of mother-tongue instruction in Sokoto and Ebonyi versus English instruction in Plateau (control group). Language of instruction continues to be a significant factor in reading achievement, with varying degrees of success across states. The most exceptional progress was observed in Ebonyi (Igbo) and Plateau (English), where learners demonstrated significant increases in their overall reading proficiency and moved into higher proficiency bands. In contrast, Sokoto (Hausa) showed slower learning growth, and a high percentage of learners still fall into the lowest proficiency band. These findings highlight the importance of language-specific, context-sensitive interventions to address varying levels of progress and challenges.

Limitations of the EGR Assessment

In addition to the contextual challenges in Hausa literacy instruction may have influenced research outcomes independently of the project interventions, other limitations include:

Baseline Effects and Learner Starting Points: Sokoto learners began at a lower baseline, with a higher proportion of pupils in the lowest proficiency bands. While some progress was recorded (e.g., more learners moving into the 6–15 CWPM range), the relative improvement appears smaller when compared to states with higher starting points. This "base effect" limits direct comparability of growth rates across languages.

Sampling Approach: The sampling strategy was systematic and gender-balanced across all states, ensuring methodological consistency. However, as with any study, the relatively small school-based sample cannot fully capture the breadth of regional disparities in educational environments, particularly in Sokoto where rural–urban variation is substantial. It is therefore possible that the observed slower progress reflects the specific composition of schools sampled, in combination with broader systemic challenges, rather than a universal state-wide trend.

Measurement Constraints: The EGRA tools, while culturally adapted, may capture different dimensions of literacy across languages. Hausa, being syllabic and diglossic (spoken vs. written differences), may have posed additional challenges in consistent measurement of reading fluency compared to English or Igbo. These technical constraints could have dampened the apparent rate of progress.

External Influences: External contextual factors such as irregular school attendance, socio-economic shocks, or interruptions in school calendars (e.g., farming cycles, community-level disruptions) may have disproportionately affected Sokoto learners. These factors were not systematically measured but likely shaped learning trajectories.

B. Social-Emotional Learning

The project aimed to improve Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) competencies of teachers and demonstrate how a comprehensive understanding of SEL principles, competencies and their application in school and classrooms can support and improve the well-being of teachers and learners. That is, to help learners be safe from abuse, exploitation, neglect and violence, and being healthy or 'well' psychologically, emotionally, socially, cognitively, physically and economically.

In this light, the project conducted a training for female teachers and head teachers on SEL. The training focused on expanding and supporting the positive role that the teachers and schools can play in creating effective learning environment to support all learners, particular those in early grade to achieve required learning outcomes and lay foundation for addressing learning crisis in project pilot LGAs and states.

A post-training survey assessed participants' perception of improvement across five SEL domains: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making – as well as safe school characteristics, understanding of self-care strategies, and knowledge of key training concepts. Key findings include:

- High positive outcomes in Ebonyi and Sokoto, with most teachers rating their post-training SEL competencies as excellent or very good.

- Moderate results in Plateau and parts of Sokoto, especially in self-management, decision-making, and school safety indicators.

- Understanding of self-care strategies was strongest in Ebonyi (80%) but weaker in Sokoto (44%), indicating a need for further support.

- Knowledge assessment scores were highest in Plateau (80%) and Ebonyi (76%), but lower in Sokoto (62%).

Self-Awareness
62.5% of respondents described their current level of self-awareness as excellent

SEL

Social-Awareness
65.6% of respondents perceived their current level of social awareness as excellent

Self-Management
81.3% of respondents perceived their current ability as excellent

Relationship Skills
100% perceived their current ability to build good relationships with learners as excellent

Responsible Decision-making
100% perceived their ability to make responsible decisions as excellent

5. Case Stories

Sokoto

Hafsat Goes to School

The activation and restructuring of the SBMC of Muhammad Bida Model Primary School in Wamakko LGA of Sokoto State by the Early Grade Reading pilot project was all the committee needed to start making impact in the community.

Following the activation, the newly mentored members swung into action, going from household to household to sensitise parents, guardians, and children about the importance of basic education, and that every child in the community is entitled to basic education in line with Nigerian government's education policy.

Hajia Rabiatu Isiaku, the women leader of the SBMC, led the group that went to Hafsat Abubakar's house. Hafsat is a physically-challenged girl having been born with disability in both of her legs. Because of her disability, Hafsat was not enrolled in school by her mother who had been raising Hafsat since her father died shortly after her birth.

With her new skills in sensitisation and advocacy, Hajia Rabiatu approached Hafsat's mother as a neighbour and friend, persuading her to enrol Hafsat in school. She complained about her inability to afford uniform and other school supplies for Hafsat, but Hajia Rabiatu offered a set of Back-to-School materials courtesy of the EGR pilot project.

Because of her disability, Hafsat also faced the challenge of commuting to and from school, relying on crawling to move around. But again, the SBMC with assistance from Hilltrust Top Foundation, a co-implementer of the EGR project, acquired a wheelchair for Hafsat, enabling her to go to school with ease. She is happy now that she is acquiring basic education to pursue her dream of becoming a journalist in the future. All thanks to the EGR project and communal support she received.

Ebonyi State

Azuiyiokwu Urban School – Safe and Secure

At Azuiyiokwu Urban Nursery and Primary School 1 & 2 in Abakaliki, Ebonyi State, the School-Based Management Committee (SBMC) collaborated with the Parent-Teacher Association (PTA) to employ a security guard for nighttime surveillance of school property. Additionally, they utilized community efforts to deter vandalism and theft during the day. The security of lives and property within the school is now assured, allowing both teachers and students to return daily to find everything intact and secure as it was left. Head teachers and pupils anticipate the upcoming break with confidence, knowing that the school will remain secure until the next academic session begins.

Plateau State

Full Support for Out-of-School Children

Learners in public primary schools in Plateau state pay a Parent-Teacher Association (PTA) levy ranging from N500 to N1,300 per term to supplement government funding of basic education. But not all parents or guardians can afford to pay this level, hence some poor families do not bother to enrol their wards.

So, when the Oando Foundation-funded LEARNOVATE - FLIP Early Grade Reading project mobilised some communities to enrol over 2,000 out-of-school children into formal schools, many of their parents could not even afford the first termly PTA level. Advocacy by local school committees (the SBMCs) in the affected schools to waive the fees for the new enrolees did not yield the desired results as the schools claimed they needed the levies for a number of things, including print examination questions for the learners at the end of the term.

But the SBMCs did not relent in their advocacy. With further support from the EGR project, they escalated the issue to the Director, Social Mobilisation Department, Plateau SUBEB – Mrs Grace Afe Nyam – who in turn took up the matter to Plateau SUBEB Chairman, Hon. Sunday Amuna.

The Chairman called a stakeholder meeting where it was discussed and agreed that for the sake of inclusive education, the indigent learners should be exempted from the payment, and that they should not be denied any necessary service for their education, including writing examinations.

6. Innovations

Comparative Research Design

A critical and innovative aspect of the project was its comparative research design, which evaluated the effectiveness of mother-tongue instruction in Sokoto and Ebonyi versus English instruction in Plateau. This research generated evidence on learning outcomes across different linguistic settings and aimed to inform future language policy and instructional practices in Nigeria.

Tech-based Monitoring and Mentoring

To deepen the impact of SBMCs, a Monitoring and Mentoring (M&M) Tool was developed and deployed across the schools. This tool was adapted from the national SBMC functionality framework and contextualized for the LEARNOVATE–FLIP project. The tool assessed performance across 22 indicators, including governance practices, financial transparency, engagement with civil society organizations, support for out-of-school children, and inclusive participation of women and children.

Establishment and Operationalization of Community Reading Hubs

Establishment and operationalization of community was innovative in providing safe, accessible, and stimulating environments for children to practice reading after school or outside formal school settings. The CRHs functioned as complementary learning spaces, encouraging peer interaction, parental involvement, and community-driven literacy promotion. They were also used to host outreach sessions on inclusive education and parental roles in learning.

7. Challenges

The implementation of the EGR pilot project in Ebonyi, Plateau and Sokoto states was not without some challenges or limitations. These challenges range from structural and systemic limitations to cultural, economic, and logistical barriers. Some of these challenges are highlighted as follows:

Limited Capacity of SBMC Members

One of the most recurrent challenges identified across the three states was the limited capacity and awareness among School-Based Management Committee (SBMC) members. Many SBMC members lacked a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities, particularly in areas such as school development planning, inclusive education, and resource mobilization. This knowledge gap often stemmed from high turnover rates among committee members due to retirement, relocation, or death, combined with outdated state-level SBMC policies that had not been revised in alignment with national standards. In Ebonyi and Sokoto states, for instance, some SBMCs had never received any form of training prior to the LEARNOVATE–FLIP intervention. This challenge was addressed through targeted orientation sessions, mentoring visits, and the development of a user-friendly monitoring and mentoring tool that guided SBMCs in understanding and applying key performance indicators.

Limited and Poor Documentation of SBMC Meetings

Another significant constraint was the infrequent and poorly documented meetings held by SBMCs. This weakness impaired timely identification and resolution of emerging school issues and limited the committee's ability to monitor progress against their School Development Plans (SDPs). Many SBMCs lacked basic reporting templates, attendance registers, or action trackers. In Plateau State's Mangu LGA, for example, only 40% of SBMCs held quarterly meetings during the first two monitoring rounds. To address this, the project team provided templates and technical assistance to support better documentation. Follow-up mentoring visits ensured that these tools were not just distributed but used meaningfully to inform school governance.

Limited Collaboration with CSOs

Weak collaboration with external stakeholders such as civil society organizations, community-based organizations, and religious groups also hampered the capacity of SBMCs to mobilize resources and expand their influence. In the early stages of the project, only 37% of SBMCs reported having any form of partnership with such organizations. This limited their ability to leverage external support for school improvement activities.

SSO Work Overloads

The workload of SSOs appeared overwhelming as they had to cover multiple schools across large distances. This limited the depth of support they could provide in some cases.

Delayed Distribution of TLMs

Timely deployment of teaching and learning materials ensured that pupils had access to age-appropriate resources that complemented classroom instruction. However, in cases where distribution was delayed or insufficient, teachers struggled to implement methodologies fully, and pupil engagement was affected.

Absenteeism

Irregular teacher and pupil attendance – particularly in Plateau State – also pointed to deeper challenges such as low motivation, conflict-related disruptions, and accountability gaps – that affected full involvement and participation of a number of target beneficiaries of the project interventions.

Dissatisfaction Among Non-Participating Schools

While the project only sought to demonstrate workable solutions for potential scale up by the government by intervening in only 20 schools in each of the three states, this approach inadvertently led to dissatisfaction among non-benefiting schools – particularly those operating shift systems using the same school facilities as the project supported schools. The non-participating schools observed the changes happening in the pilot schools and sometimes this was not well received by the former. Nonetheless, the project advised them to be hopeful of similar interventions from the government and partners in the near future.

Economic Hardship

A persistent challenge during the project implementation was the economic hardship faced by many households. This led to increased absenteeism by teachers and learners, and some children even dropping out of school as their parents or guardians preferred for them to hawk wares to support the family than go to school.

8. Lessons Learnt

The implementation of the EGR project, the successes recorded as well as the challenges faced provided key learning moments for the project team and partners.

School Support

- SSOs proved to be a critical link between state education authorities and schools. Their close supervision and regular visits enhanced teacher accountability and improved instructional delivery. SSOs and LGEA staff were successfully integrated as master trainers in Sokoto State, which strengthened local ownership and positioned government structures to sustain project activities beyond external support. A key lesson is that SSOs need structured schedules, transport support, and ongoing training to remain effective in providing hands-on guidance to teachers and head teachers.

Teaching and Learning Materials

- Distribution of TLMs must be aligned with the school calendar and closely monitored to track not only distribution but also utilization of materials at the classroom and community hub levels.

Social and Emotional Learning

- Female teachers trained in Social and Emotional Learning applied their skills to address safeguarding issues effectively within schools and their wider communities. This integration of SEL with literacy instruction demonstrated that TLM deployment, when coupled with inclusive training, contributes to both improved learning outcomes and safer learning environments.

Coaching and Mentoring

- Teachers who received consistent mentoring demonstrated significant improvements in lesson pacing, classroom management, and learner engagement. For instance, there was a notable increase in correct letter-sound recognition among Primary 1 and 2 learners. However, irregular or infrequent coaching visits diluted the intended impact, highlighting the need for a sustainable structure where mentoring is embedded in school systems rather than treated as an external intervention.

- Embedding mentoring within Teacher Learning Circles (TLCs) and Cluster Learning Cycles (CLCs) fostered peer-to-peer support, which increased teacher confidence and encouraged sustained application of early grade reading methodologies. A key lesson is that frequent, structured, and context-sensitive coaching sessions lead to more

effective teacher practice compared to one-off trainings, while irregular or missed visits reduced effectiveness.

Community Engagement

- Functional SBMCs significantly contribute to school improvement when they are properly equipped, mentored, and engaged. In schools where SBMCs met the functionality benchmarks, there were clear indications of improved governance, increased community participation, and enhanced learning environments.

- Another important lesson relates to the value of partnerships. SBMCs that had strong collaborations with civil society organizations, traditional institutions, or local philanthropists were better able to mobilize resources, initiate community reading hubs, and advocate for infrastructure improvements. In contrast, committees that operated in isolation struggled to leverage external support.

- SBMC involvement in whole school development planning (WSDP) is essential for effective education delivery. In schools where SBMCs took ownership of WSDP development, implementation, and monitoring, school activities were better aligned with learner needs, and there was greater accountability.

- The experience from the field also emphasized the importance of localized and context-specific approaches. Performance varied widely between LGAs, even within the same state. For example, while some LGAs like Jos North and Shagari reported high levels of community engagement and inclusive participation, others like Mangu and Abakaliki lagged behind. This variation highlights the fact that no one-size-fits-all model can effectively address the diverse realities of communities. Tailored interventions that respond to the specific socio-cultural and economic dynamics of each location are far more effective in enabling change.

7. Conclusion &Recommendations

The LEARNOVATE–FLIP Early Grade Reading (EGR) Project, implemented by the Oando Foundation across Ebonyi, Plateau, and Sokoto states, successfully demonstrated a community-driven, inclusive, and data-informed model for addressing Nigeria's foundational learning crisis.

By building the capacity of teachers, head teachers and school support officers; strengthening SBMCs and school-community linkages; creating safe and accessible learning spaces; and promoting inclusive education, the project effectively facilitated the enrolment and retention of marginalized children—particularly girls and out-of-school children, those with disabilities, and from economically disadvantaged households and ethnic minority communities.

The project's impact was also evident in the enhanced community ownership and accountability for basic education. SBMCs became more active in school development planning, teacher monitoring, financial tracking, and resource mobilization, with notable increases in women and children's participation in school governance. They evolved into effective watchdogs, advocates, and problem-solvers within their communities.

Monitoring exercises, anchored in digital tools like ODK and dashboards, enabled real-time data collection and responsive implementation. This facilitated targeted mentorship, community dialogues, and strategic adjustments by stakeholders, which are all a demonstration of a scalable, community-led, and cost-effective model in response to Nigeria's foundational learning crisis.

Recommendations

Moving forward, several strategic recommendations are presented to inform sustainability planning, future programming, and broader policy dialogue in basic education.

1. Teachers remain the chief drivers of foundational literacy. Their continuous training, coaching and mentoring should remain a priority of the government. In addition, government should prioritise employment of more teachers to address the high student–teacher ratios observed in supported schools.

2. SUBEBs and local education authorities should ensure that provision and distribution of teaching and learning materials must not only be timely but also aligned with the school calendar and closely monitored to track utilization of the materials at the classroom and community hub levels.

3. Education authorities should create structured schedules for SSOs and provide them with transport support and ongoing training to remain effective in providing hands-on guidance to teachers and head teachers.

4. There is a need to institutionalize regular SBMC mentoring and supervision as part of the education quality assurance framework at both the LGEA and state levels. The mentoring model adopted under the LEARNOVATE–FLIP project proved effective in enhancing functionality and accountability among SBMCs. Therefore, embedding this approach within SUBEB operational systems can ensure continuity and scale-up.

5. The capacity of SBMCs must be continually enhanced through targeted training, exposure visits, and peer learning opportunities. In particular, emphasis should be placed on areas such as school development planning, inclusive education, resource mobilization, and stakeholder engagement. Special attention should also be given to the orientation and integration of newly appointed SBMC members.

6. State-level SBMC policies need to be reviewed and updated in line with national frameworks and current realities. Outdated provisions regarding membership composition, roles, and oversight structures must be revised to reflect gender equity, child participation, and the evolving nature of school-community relationships. A simplified version of the SBMC policy should be made available in local languages to foster broader understanding among rural communities.

7. In addition, SBMCs should be supported to develop formal partnerships with local NGOs, CBOs, faith-based institutions, traditional leaders, and philanthropists. These partnerships can increase access to resources, technical support, and shared accountability mechanisms. A simple partnership facilitation guide should be developed and distributed to assist SBMCs in initiating and managing such collaborations.

8. To improve financial transparency and accountability, a harmonized, user-friendly financial record-keeping template should be introduced and adopted across schools. Community awareness sessions on financial openness should also be organized to build trust and ensure that parents and community members are informed about how school resources are generated and used.

9. To reduce the likelihood of children dropping out of school due to poverty-related challenges, government and development partners should explore leveraging economic empowerment and livelihood programmes to support parents of children in target schools.

Overall, the sustainability of the LEARNOVATE–FLIP EGR pilot project depends not only on the achievements made during the project period but also on the systems, partnerships, and attitudes it has helped to inspire. If stakeholders at all levels – school, community, LGEA, state, and national – can act on the lessons and recommendations highlighted in this report, then the vision of improved foundational learning for every Nigerian child will come within closer reach.