

BUILDING THE FOUNDATION:

Transforming the future through Supplementary Reading Materials (SRMs)



As part of the Learnovate-FLIP Early Grade Reading (EGR) project, sponsored by Oando Foundation, Quality Education Development Associates (QEDA) is utilizing innovative approaches and best practices to improve learning outcomes for early graders nationwide. QEDA has developed something special to enhance the success of this Foundational Literacy Improvement Program. We have crafted a treasure trove of supplementary reading materials (SRMs) designed to supercharge reading skills in early grade learners. Using the language of the immediate environment of learners in three pilot states; Igbo in Ebonyi, Hausa in Sokoto and English language in Plateau.

Think of these materials as more than just books – they are educational adventures! We have created 34 unique titles, a mix of 23 decodable readers and 11 levelled readers, all bursting with local flavour. These are not your typical textbooks. We have woven in stories that resonate with the learners' everyday lives, using familiar language and concepts. It is like learning with a friendly neighbour!

Why Supplementary Reading Materials?

Reading materials are a vital necessity for learners especially at the basic level. They are important for building reading skills, developing vocabulary, cognitive and socio-emotional skills. Access to reading materials helps learners develop love for reading and, consequently, affects the quality of learning outcomes as learners who have books to read have higher chances of improvement.

Supplementary Reading Materials (SRMs) support the systemic nature of early grade reading instruction, which comprises of 5 key elements that guide learners through learning from familiar to unfamiliar concepts – a) Phonemic awareness, b) Phonics, c) Vocabulary development, d) Comprehension, and e) Oral fluency. These materials support learning by providing conceptualized and level-appropriate instruction, ensuring that learners develop the right literacy skills for a particular level and build upon already acquired knowledge as they progress through reading competency and move to higher grades.

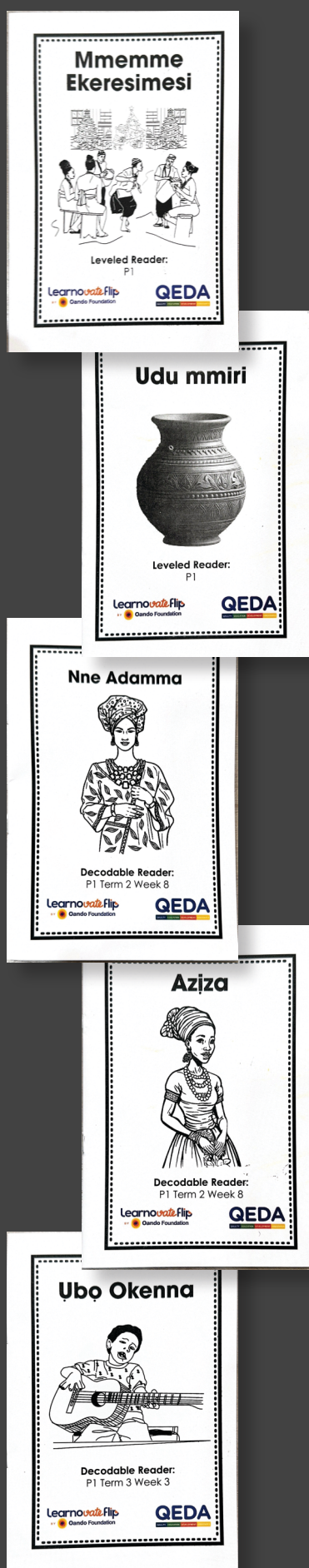
Decodable Readers (Decodables)

These have been designed to help learners learn how to read and are especially critical in guiding beginning readers to build early reading skills using the elements of phonemic awareness and phonics. Use of letters and sounds is controlled, focusing on words that the learner has already interacted with during phonics class. The scope and sequence of letter introduction in the decodables are determined by identifying the most frequently used letters and sounds within the local language of the learners, starting 2 – 3 per instruction to ease practice, and progressing towards the less frequently used sounds. Word length, number of words per line and number of words per page, are all considered based on the grade of the learners and text is developed to suit the interest of their age grade as well provide contextualized understanding.

Because decodables provide text that is targeted towards the designed instruction for the week, they serve as reliable tools for reinforcing letters and sounds introduced during phonics class. But beyond that, they also provide opportunity for learners to practice gaining speed, accuracy and understanding the meanings of the text as they read. The recurring use of familiar letters and sounds throughout the text reduces frustration and improves motivation for learners as everything they attempt to read becomes familiar. With increasing practice, learners will begin to identify letters and the sounds they make.

The Levelled Readers

As learners proceed in grade levels, they gradually master letter/sound relationships and are able to read a variety of words with increasing fluency and attempt more complex words and sentences combining familiar words. Overtime, as skills continue to build, these “emerging readers” are also able to read text that is on an increasingly higher level, hence the need for **levelled readers**. The Igbo levelled readers have been developed to provide structured reading support at the level of learners. For each grade, at least readers have been designed to serve throughout the school year, with progression from familiar to unfamiliar words and concepts. With rhyming patterns and repetition of simple sentence structures adopted, these readers provide motivation and ease



as learners mostly have to focus on learning the new word added in each sentence. As they move up in levels, the need for repetition decreases and they would have gained good grasp of words. We can expect that, with the increasing mastery of reading skills, learners will build confidence to take on challenges like attempting new words and learning how to write.



So, What's Unique About These SRMs?

We developed these supplementary reading materials with the learners in mind! Expert teams versatile in material development, curriculum design and Igbo language were engaged to conduct this robust activity. The national reading framework in addition to the USAID Enabling Writers program guide were resourceful reference materials, helping to align SRM content with national education goals and global standards. These materials also incorporate the global design elements to ensure accessibility by the learners.

- Text is created in the realistic context in which learners live and learn. This approach improves their connection to the text, their understanding and motivation to keep learning how to read.
- Besides being appropriately levelled and culturally relevant, these texts are also high-interest materials that spark excitement in the learners. Exploring patterns and visual illustrations helps them put the concepts in perspective – relating pictures with real-life people and objects in their immediate environment. This improves understanding.

- Learners can identify with characters used in these materials. They look like them, live like them and are the same age as they are. Other realistic characters used in the books also represent the familiar ones that they encounter often in their daily lives.
- Story plots are situated within the context of the learners, aligned with normal activities in their immediate context. For example, “Nneka eating odara” on page 6 can easily be Adaora reading about it. Now, that's exciting for Adaora because this book is telling a part of her story! And, imagine if odara is Adaora's favourite fruit...

Additionally, the Igbo SRMs draw on traditional themes and folktales, incorporating moral and social values, family and community. Each text contains appropriate grade-level content which is simplified based on the learning expectations for a particular grade.

WHAT'S IN IT FOR LEARNERS?

The language-based SRMs are targeted at encouraging early grade reading, ultimately improving educational outcomes even beyond the classroom. With catchy titles and even more interesting content within the pages, each of these books will take learners on an adventure of learning, sound after sound; advancing in reading proficiency and other core literacy skills.

But there's more! These readers are not just about letters and words. Each title is packed with valuable life lessons. Good moral behaviour, strong values, the importance of family and community – it's all in there. With these decodable and levelled readers, we are building not just readers, but well-rounded individuals. And to make things even more engaging, these materials are sprinkled with vibrant images that make learning a visual feast. Learners will engage with visuals that go beyond just pretty pictures, but are tools to help them grasp concepts, making the journey from simple to complex knowledge a breeze.

We're thrilled to share these materials and watch young minds flourish!

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