



**Mary Anderson** has been involved with language and literacy for many years. She started as a language teacher and researcher, and then moved into the world of publishing, helping to create highly illustrated books for students all over the world. More recently, she has gone back to her research origins in Northern Nigeria, where she encountered families who managed their lives with minimal material resources - or lived in abject poverty begging on the streets.

In Nigeria, the post-colonial educational system with its official focus on English is alive and kicking, and a huge percentage of children leave school without being able to read, especially in the North. With her friend and colleague Hindy Mohammed, Mary co-directs [MuKaranta](#), a community project funded by sponsorship from a successful local business.

MuKaranta aims to give teachers confidence in their own literacy skills, which in turn empowers them to use their mother tongue, Hausa, for literacy classes in primary schools. This holistic process involves training, facilitation and materials that reflect the local language, culture and values. MuKaranta's current focus is Jigawa State, which borders Niger and the Boko Haram heartland. Here step-down training – delivered in the words of a recent WhatsApp message 'with passion and commitment' – is enabling hundreds of teachers to influence the literacy outcomes of thousands of girls and boys.