

# Mining in Nasarawa Communities: Ticking Time Bomb, Residents Cry Out

Residents living in the mining axis in Abuni community, Awe local government area and Uke in Karu LGA, have raised the alarm over the growing environmental and health hazards posed by unchecked mining activities in their communities, calling it a "ticking time bomb" that threatens their well-being. Recall that the Nasarawa State government recently discovered lead, copper, zinc and lithium in communities like Awe and Abuni. Stakeholders have said proper management of the resources of the state will not only increase government revenue to be able to provide basic social amenities but will ultimately improve the quality of life and wellbeing of the citizens.

However, residents, at a media interaction on the state of



mining communities in Nasarawa State, organised by Renevlyn Development Initiative (RDI) and partners, yesterday, said their source of water: 'Rafin Jaki River' has been polluted with waste water chemicals flowing from the mining sites to the river. Worst still, Isah Imam Abubakar, a resident from Abuni community said another unfriendly practice that the locals now contend with is the earth-shaking rock blasting which are carried out indiscriminately and intermittently by the mining firm using dynamites which results to cracks in most of the houses in the community. He therefore called on the Nasarawa State government to intervene by carrying out a fact-finding visit to Abuni community with particular attention on the communities around the mining sites and the Rafin Jaki River. "A comprehensive environmental

audit of Abuni community, Uke district and environs including their source of water and farm environment should be conducted. We also appeal to the state government to revoke the mining license of mining companies if the investigation shows breach of Nigeria's environmental laws," he appealed.

The executive director, Renevlyn Development Initiative (RDI), Philip Jakpor, said along with the influx of miners into the community is also the growing sex trade targeting young girls who are supposed to be in school, some as young as 13 years, adding that, "RDI learnt that due to the poverty in the community and lack of access to schools by the girls, the miners promise them gifts and jewelries often in exchange for sleeping with them. Some of the

girls have also been lured to abscond from their families to live with the miners in their camps." Jakpor therefore tasked the state government to halt artisanal mining practices that affect the people and environment in Abuni community and Uke district and carry out proper oversight on mining operations in Abuni, Uke district and other mining

communities in Nasarawa State. Executive director of Environmental Defenders Network (EDEN), Barrister Chima Williams, said the mistakes of oil are already happening in the solid minerals sector, adding that, "It is for this reason that we advocated that Nigeria's Mining Act should create crimes and punishments section that can be enforced either by the host communities or the Ministry of Mines and Solid Minerals. Clearly, what is happening in Awe LGA and Uke fit perfectly into sanctionable acts because the environment, livelihoods and lives of the people are being systematically destroyed right under the nose of the state government."