

Quarry activities, borehole drilling pose risks to Abuja residents, others



■ A truck on the dusty road to load gravel from a quarry site at Mpape Durumi in Abuja

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Agency (NASRDA), Prof. Seidu Mohammed, predicted a likelihood of more of such incidents unless the indiscriminate clustering of boreholes was controlled.

A statement obtained from the head of Press and Public Relations, Ministry of Science and Technology, AbdulGaniyu Aminu, on the committee's report revealed, "A study conducted by Julius Berger on the geological, hydrological and geotechnical investigation for Abuja identified Mpape as a shear zone that was weak with several fractures and faults system."

The report further explained that the country was prone to seismic hazards following the earth

tremor in Kwoi, Kaduna State; Saki, Oyo State and Igbogene in Bayelsa State in 2016.

Following the tremor at Mpape, the Federal Ministry of Mines and Steel had ordered the suspension of rock blasting activities around the area for a preliminary investigation. But investigation revealed that drilling of boreholes and quarry activities in the area and its environs have continued unregulated.

Records published by the National Population Commission (NPC) put the estimated population figure of Nasarawa, Niger states and the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) at 11.6 million as at 2016. A breakdown obtained from Demographic Statistics

document of the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) shows that Niger, the most populated of the three states, has 5.556m. FCT has an estimated 3.564m population while Nasarawa State has 2.523m people living there.

However, a large section of these 11m people do not have access to public tap water across the states, including the FCT. This has caused a rise in borehole drilling, our survey shows. Such activities expose the affected areas to risks of earth tremor or even earthquake.

Permit not needed to drill boreholes

According to a section of the presidential committee report, for 30 years, the upland around

Maitama has been exposed to unregulated drilling of boreholes. The record shows that 110,000 boreholes in Abuja extract 330,000 metric tonnes of water daily from the ground, posing further threats of tremor.

Our investigation shows that six months after the incidents at Mpape, there's no formal regulation of borehole drilling in Abuja and the neighbouring states surveyed for over a four-week period.

Bulus John, a Mpape resident said, "We depend on open ground water from quarry pits, and boreholes for those who can afford them. In a street, one can count about five boreholes. They are a common sight. Water vendors patronise them, selling a 20-litre

jerry-can at N20 to residents who do not have access to those boreholes."

At Mararaba town of Nasarawa State, said to be the most populated area, there's no tap water.

Mr Kolade Segun, a house owner in the town said, "I did not request for any permission to build my borehole. I contacted a company to do that for me and they said they were licenced to operate and did not need a clearance to drill for a particular house. It took them about nine hours and they were done."

"I got a plumber who did the concrete slab work and connected the pipe to the reservoir and we now have running water. I spent about N550,000 because they said they had to drill deeper for about 50 meters to reach the waterbed."

About 20 other landlords who have boreholes in Karu, Jikwoyi in FCT; New Nyanya and Masaka in Nasarawa State; Madalla and Suleja towns in Niger State, also related similar experience - they were not required to get approval to sink boreholes.

Musa Audu, a house owner in New Nyanya said, "I drilled it five years ago and I did not see any official to tell me it was illegal. I invited Geodrill Limited. They came and did the survey, and in one week, I paid the charges and the borehole was done."

For David Olaiya, who lives in Suleja town of Niger State, it was surprising that he should get any approval to drill a borehole. He said, "Why do I need an approval for that? Government apparently failed to provide potable water, even when it is close to Abuja. So we had to resort to self-help. Besides, it is in my land."

Results of a survey on the prevalence of borehole drilling conducted by *Daily Trust* on *Sunday* in Abuja and its environs

The report further explained that the country was prone to seismic hazards following the earth tremor in Kwoi, Kaduna State; Saki, Oyo State and Igbogene in Bayelsa State in 2016



■ A borehole drilling rig heading for a project in nearby Nasarawa state

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