

## Nigeria: 28 kids killed by lead poisoning from gold mining

May 15 2015, byMichelle Faul

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Twenty-eight children have died from lead poisoning from illegal gold mining in a remote west-central village, Nigerian health officials said, while doctors still are treating thousands from an earlier outbreak.

Dozens more [children](#) are sick in the Rafi area of Niger state and action must be taken quickly if they are not to suffer irreversible neurological damage, Michelle Chouinard, Nigeria director for Doctors Without Borders, told The Associated Press on Friday.

Her organization still is treating children from a 2010 mass [lead poisoning](#), in Zamfara state, that killed 400 kids and left many paralyzed, blind and with learning disabilities because of a three-year delay in government funding for a cleanup.

Chouinard said they have cured 2,688 of 5,451 people infected and hope to complete treatment next year. They have had most success in the worst-affected village of Bagega, where all but 189 of 1,426 people have had the lead leached from their bodies.

Junior Health Minister Fidelis Nwankwo said Thursday all those newly infected in neighboring Niger state are under 5 with 43 percent of the 65 sickened children dying.

"The devastating impact of this outbreak is associated with new mining sites which were found to contain more leaded ores which are often brought home for crushing and processing," he said.

Previous government efforts to forbid artisanal mining have failed as poor villagers make up to 10 times as much from gold than from farming.

In Zamfara state, where the processing area was found to contain over 100,000 parts per million of lead—the United Nations considers 400 parts per million safe—Idaho-based TerraGraphics International Foundation took 5 ½ months to clean up and also trained villagers in safer mining.

"This (training) is working fairly well and I think it's one of the contributing factors to why the number of patients is decreasing so much and so quickly in Bagega," Chouinard said.

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