GEOSCIENCE AWARENESS IN NIGERIA - A PRELIMINARY SURVEY

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ABSTRACT

Nigeria, with a total land area of 923,768sq km which is prone in places to environmental degradation and geohazards, is underlain by rocks of varied geological heterogeneity hosting about 34 different mineral occurrences and considerable oil sand gas reserve. With these geoscientific scenario, and with less than 0.004% of the populace being professional geoscientists, this study sets out to find the level of popular awareness of the geosciences as it relates to mineral endowment localization and production; environmental issues; hazards and natural disasters; agriculture and food production; water supply; and general contributions to national development.

The survey, which utilized questionnaires and oral interviews, involved a total of 21,250 respondents comprising students at primary and secondary levels; university students on non-geoscience courses; primary and secondary school teachers; informal traders; professionals (medical and health workers, finance sector workers and civil servants) and artisanal miners from the six geopolitical zones (North-west, North-east, North-central, South-west, South-east, South-south,) of Nigeria.

The results show that there is wide variation in the level of awareness amongst the respondents of the relevance of geoscience to the different issues. For example, the highest percentage of awareness (68.21%) of the contribution of geoscience to national
development was recorded amongst the medical workers in the South-west zone as compared to 0.00% amongst primary school respondents in the North-west zone. Overall, respondents are least aware of the role of geosciences in agriculture and food production, but show the highest level of awareness about geosciences and environmental geohazards and mineral endowment respectively. On a career and group basis, the students especially at the lower levels and the traders are the least aware of the role of geosciences in all the areas while the medical workers and finance workers exhibit the highest level of awareness. The artisanal miners’ levels of awareness are relatively higher only in relation to geosciences relevance to mineral endowment.

On a geopolitical zonal basis, the respondents from South-south and South-west zones show generally higher levels of awareness compared to other zones. Respondents from the northern zones especially, the north eastern zone shows the least level of awareness. The awareness level generally shows correlation to some extent with the relative intensity of geoscientific activity in each of the zones.