

Coal in Nigeria: a 3-part series

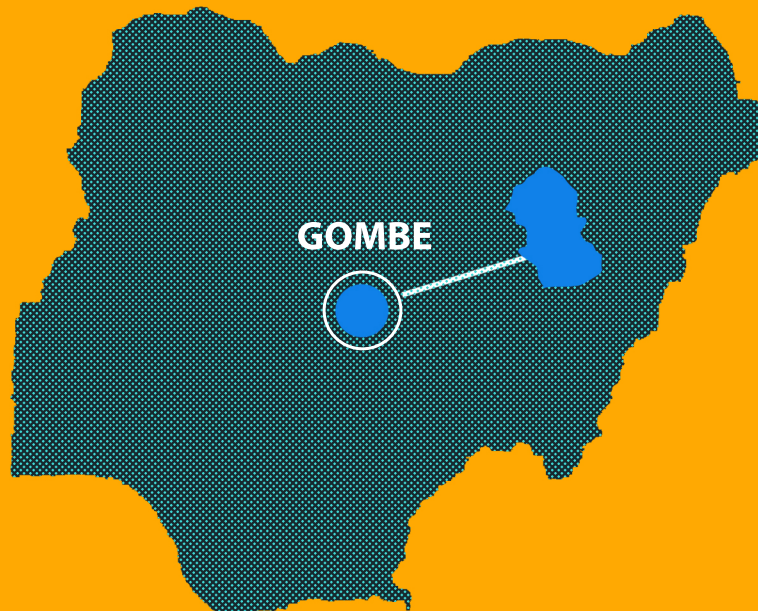
Part 3



**COAL MINING IN GOMBE STATE
BY
ASHAKA CEMENT**

Introduction

Nigeria holds large coal deposits from the East to the Northern parts of the country, estimated to be at least 2 billion metric tonnes.



The government has recently placed a high priority on utilising these resources to increase Nigeria's electricity generating capacity. In 2016, the Ministry of Mines and Steel Development announced that it was working in collaboration with the Federal Ministry of Power, Works and Housing to increase Nigeria power generation to include 30% coal in its power mix.

Nigeria's goal is to revitalise the coal mining industry and expand power generation by attracting companies to develop these large coal resources and construct coal-fired generating plants that will connect to the country's electrical distribution grid.

Out of 28 coal blocks identified across 12 States, Kogi State leads with 8 blocks while Enugu State has 6 blocks. Coal mining is currently active in Kogi and Gombe States.

This factsheet looks at coal mining in **Gombe State** being undertaken by **Ashaka Cement** and its effects on the livelihoods of local communities and in particular the degradation of soil and water resources.

Study Methodology

The methodology used for this study was essentially qualitative, through the collection of feedback from seven community members and households belonging to different occupational groups, marital status and educational background.

One of the limitations faced during the research was a sense of community fatigue. Some members refused to let us conduct any more research with their aid because they felt that in the last 10 years many organisations including local, international and the media have visited the community to collect stories about their plight but no help has come their way.

Primary data was collected through key informant interviews, focus group discussions and community stakeholder meetings. Personal visits and observation of the study sites were also used by the researchers to confirm the respondents' views.

Secondary data was collected through desk research.

Findings

I. Coal mining by Ashaka Cement PLC in Gombe State

In Gombe state, coal mining takes place in Maigaga Community. Maigaga is in Akko Local Government Area of Gombe State about 40 km from Gombe City. Maigaga has proven coal reserves of 4.5 million tonnes.

Coal is mined in Maigaga by Ashaka Cement Plc, a company owned by the French company Lafarge which was granted a license to mine coal in the community by the Federal Ministry of Mines and Steel Development under license number 887 that expires on 12th December 2031. Unfortunately, we failed to get a copy of the CDA between Ashaka Cement and the Maigaga community.

Formal mining commenced in 2007 after the landowners were compensated financially for their lands and were relocated to a new community site.

In its [official website](#) Lafarge states that it has the ambition of producing 40% less net CO₂ emissions per ton of cement than they did in 1990. The company further states that they have continued to reduce net CO₂ emissions per ton of cement in its Nigeria operations. They also claim that they have focused on dust control and reduced emissions to as low as 30n/mg³ (while the Nigerian government's standard is 100 n/mg³). They, however, don't state how this was achieved or make reference to their coal mining operations.



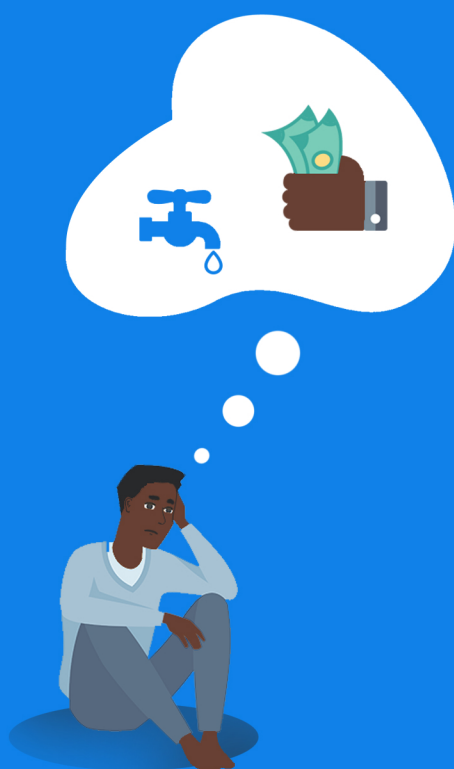
II. Results of the Study

1. Displacement and increased poverty

Even though the members of the Maigaga community who had to give up their land were compensated, the amounts provided were so little that community members have been displaced. This has resulted not only in displacement but also in increased poverty for lack of means to undertake the economic activities to which they were accustomed to.

2. Lack of Water Sources

Just like other coal mining communities around the world, water is a major issue. In the past residents of Maigaga sourced water through wells. When the mining commenced most of the wells dried up because of coal mining. The Ashaka cement provided 5 boreholes to the community but many are not working; only one solar borehole and hand pump are functioning at minimal capacity as a key water source for the residents.



Conclusion

Coal mining leads to extensive environmental degradation. In the case of Maiganga community, the mining activities of Ashaka Cement have led to serious issues such as water unavailability, that has an adverse effect on the wellbeing of the local communities. The communities with the exception of Maiganga requested a halt of all mining activities, a fresh environmental impact assessment as well as the restoration of their degraded land.



Recommendations

1. The Federal Ministry of Environment of Nigeria should immediately carry out Environmental Impact Assessment on all the coal mining sites in Nigeria.
2. Ashaka Cement should urgently review its operations and ensure its operations adhere to the UN Guiding Principle on Business and Human Rights.
3. There is an urgent need to have a comprehensive Community Development Agreement signed between the Maiganga community and Ashaka Cement.
4. The Ministry of Mines and Steel Development to stop the issuance of licences for coal mining in Nigeria.
5. The Federal Government of Nigeria should accelerate the national plans to a rapid, just transition towards 100% renewable energy for all Nigerians.
6. The Federal Government of Nigeria should abide by their commitments to the Paris Agreement which requires phased reduction of greenhouse gases emissions such as coal-fired plants.