



US seeks increased intervention in Zamfara lead poisoning

Written by Christian Okeke Thursday, 26 May 2011

THE United States (US) government, through its Centres for Disease Control and Prevention in Nigeria, on Wednesday, stated that the US and Nigeria need to step up what they are doing, to prevent the spread of lead poison in Zamfara State.

Country Director of the centres in Nigeria, Dr Okey Nwanyanwu, told reporters at the Rosa Parks Education and Information Resource Centre located at the US Embassy compound in Abuja, that more resources needed to be deployed so as to tackle the situation adequately.

He disclosed that the US government had spent a lot of money to step up health awareness programmes in the affected area.

Dr Nwanyanwu noted that the awareness campaign included stopping children in the area from eating dust.

Though he did not disclose the amount that was required to effectively tackle the challenge, the country director expressed optimism that Nigeria had the potential to meet its Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) by 2015.

He described the creation of the Nigeria Centre for Disease Control as a step in the right direction.

A major outbreak of lead poisoning in children had been occurring in Zamfara State since around March 2010 which was attributed to the processing of lead-rich ore for the extraction of gold.

A World Health Organisation (WHO) report noted that in March and April, the Zamfara State Ministry of Health was informed by Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) of an increasing number of childhood deaths and illness in villages in the two local government areas (LGAs) of Bukkuyum and Anka.