

2 dead, 3 injured in Ebonyi mining pit collapse



Tragedy struck at Ajirija lead mining site in Ihietutu Community, Ishiagu, Ivo Local Government Area of Ebonyi State, weekend, when the pit collapsed, leaving two persons dead and three others critically injured.

The site, reportedly owned by one Henry Ahanaotu, was said to have been parcelled out and subletted to unlicensed petty miners operating without professional supervision.

The affected pit was allegedly being managed by an indigene of Ihietutu, Mrs Lovelyn Victor.

An indigene of the community, who spoke to NAN, on the condition of anonymity, said the incident was one in a series of unreported tragedies at the site.

He recalled that a similar incident earlier in the year also claimed two lives and left several others injured, yet no sanctions were imposed on the site owner or the illegal operators.

“Unfortunately, these incidents and deaths only end with the police, if at all,” he said.

Reacting, Ahanaotu described the incident as unfortunate, but said he subletted the lease to the operators as a means of empowering youths of the community.

He argued that Victor was an established miner with over four excavators and other heavy equipment.

“Mine pit collapse is a regular occurrence anywhere mining is carried out. Even Royal Salt, touted as the biggest mining firm in Nigeria, experiences incidences of pit collapse with attendant deaths.

“The incident happened last weekend but we have yet to visit the scene to inspect and know why it occurred.

“I have also called the Federal Mines Officer to brief him. But as for carrying out operations based on safety principles, she does it well.

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“She is also in partnership with other operators in the site. All we are doing is to help empower the people,” Ahanaotu said.

The Spokesman for the state Police Command, Joshua Ukandu, confirmed the incident.

Ukandu said a report from the Ivo Police Division indicated that five persons were involved in the accident, contrary to the six reported by community members.

Meanwhile, the state Chairperson of the Federation of Women Miners, Mrs. Sylvia Ogbuinya, has expressed regrets over the tragedy and extended condolences to the bereaved families.