

Lecture Series on Medical Geology delivered by Prof. Davies

Professor Theophilus Davies from the University of Nigeria at Nsukka was hosted by the Department of Geology and Petroleum Studies from the 26th August to 2nd September 2018; he conducted a series of lectures on Medical Geology (MG) in preparation for the establishment of a UNESCO Chair of Medical Geology in Africa. The visit was sponsored by African Network of Earth Sciences (ANESI) and UNESCO.

Professor Davies is a principal exponent of the emerging science of MG in Africa. He said, 'MG is a relatively new field in the Earth and Medical Sciences; since its formalization in 2000, MG has supported diagnostic and therapeutic research in environmental and public health in Africa'. He further noted that, 'research and practice of MG has thus been of immeasurable benefit in combating a number of environmental diseases arising from abandoned mining sites and migration of chemical elements'.

Professor Davies was interviewed during his visit and below is the interaction:

What is MG, share examples where it can be applied?

MG is the study and use of geology to support diagnostic & therapeutic research in environmental and public health. MG can also be instrumental in farming areas where migration of chemical elements has occurred leading to iodine deficiency, lead in food crops, various cancers among others.

Which institution will host The UNESCO Chair of Medical Geology in Africa?

The University of Nigeria at Nsukka has applied to host the Chair, however it will partner with other universities and research institutions in Africa and other parts of the world.

Have you given lectures at other universities or institutions in Africa?

Yes; at the University of Nairobi in Kenya, a conference on Medical Geology was also held in Rwanda. The lectures and conferences have been useful to inform others about MG and also encourage them to take more interest in the field.

What programmes are planned for MG and what support will be given to other universities in Africa?

The targeted programmes in a proposed new teaching unit of MG which the Department of Geology & Petroleum Studies at Makerere University may consider setting up, will be developed around the assembled M.Sc. and Diploma curricula. These will entail developing further the public lectures delivered by Prof. Davies.

What is your message or advice for researchers and government?

In view of the developments in mining and industrialisation in Africa, MG is a key area to be researched, studied and documented because it has major impact on our environment and health. Governments should provide more funding to skill researchers and provide facilities in Institutions of higher learning.

The targeted programmes in a proposed new teaching unit of MG which the Department of Geology at Makerere University may consider setting up, will be developed around the assembled M.Sc. and Diploma curricula of Prof. Davies.

However, there is a dearth of urgently needed expertise in the area of MG to teach and direct research in the envisaged programmes in Africa. The proposed lecture courses to be delivered under the ANESI Lecturer Exchange Programme (ALEP), we hope, would help in laying the groundwork for establishing the curricula, as well as in facilitating the development of a critical mass of expertise in this field, capable of sustainably propagating this innovative contribution to environmental geosciences and public health in Africa.