

SEJ Awards for Reporting on the Environment 2013 Photo Award



Across a swath of northern Nigeria, an environmental catastrophe is unfolding. Lead from illegal gold mines, like this one in Dareta, is sickening thousands of children. More than 400 kids have already died. Many have suffered seizures, some have been mentally stunted for life.



Women and their children wait for medication at the clinic in Dareta. Treating children with high levels of lead is a painstaking process that works only if their environment at home is free from lead.



David Gilkey

for five photos published on NPR.org

**“In Nigerian Gold Rush, Lead Poisons
Thousands of Children”**



To extract gold from the raw ore, workers must first crush the ore, then wash and strain it through car floor mats. Finally the slurry is ground together by hand with a silvery glob of mercury in large metal wash basins, like the one used here at a gold processing site in Dareta, Nigeria.



A man works in the narrow tunnel of an illegal gold mine just outside the tiny village of Dareta in northwestern Nigeria. The problem in this part of Nigeria is that the gold being extracted in artisanal mines is mingled with veins of lead. Compounding the problem, miners use primitive methods to process the raw ore.



A health worker looks for signs of vision in the eyes of Yusuf Labbo. Severe lead poisoning has left the 5-year-old boy blind. He weighs just 22 pounds, can't speak or walk and spends most of his days clutched in his mother's arms.