

Niger Delta Weekly: Preventing Escalation of the Herder-Farmer Conflict in Rivers State

October 17-23, 2021

Description

This edition of the weekly update spotlights the herder-farmer conflict in the Niger Delta with a focus on the resurgence of clashes between farmers and herders in Rivers State. According to data (see map below), resource conflicts caused more than 100 fatalities in Rivers State between January 2018 and September 2021. Recent incidents indicate a resurgence of clashes between herders and farmers over access to land for farming and grazing in the State. In June, 2021, for example, a 26-year old man was reportedly killed during a clash between herders and farmers in Egbeda town, Ogba/Egbema/Ndoni LGA. Separately, in June, armed herdsmen reportedly trespassed on farmlands to graze their cattle, destroyed crops, and forced residents to abandon their farms across several communities in Khana and Eleme LGAs. More recently, on October 14, 2021, scores of women protested against the alleged invasion of their farmlands by herdsmen in Obirikom community, Ogba/Egbema/Ndoni LGA. Several incidents of kidnapping, sexual violence and killings have been reported following the resurgence of the conflict.

Why it Matters

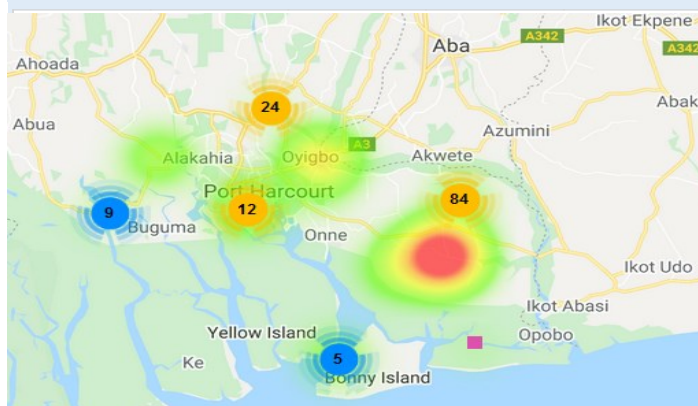
Rising tensions over the herder-farmer conflict could escalate in ways that could adversely impact the peace and conflict landscape in the State. The evolving criminal dimensions of the conflict and mass protests against herders are early warning signs of growing grievances and hostilities between herders and farmers. The emerging situation could spark off a cycle of violence and reprisal killings which could cause serious socio-economic disruptions and political instability.

Social: A resurgence of the herder-farmer conflict could intensify ethno-religious divisions and communal hostilities, and undermine social cohesion in the State. The criminal dimensions of the conflict could trigger a cycle of violence whereby any attack on farmers or herders would result in a series of punitive reprisals. Recurrent clashes could also cause the proliferation of communal militias and vigilante groups which could intensify communal and criminal violence.

Economic: The herder-farmer conflict could be economically devastating, especially as it is becoming intense and increasingly intertwined with criminality. It could disrupt farming and livestock production, and cause loss of livelihoods and occupational displacement. Recurrent clashes could also reduce agricultural output and household income, and cause food insecurity and rural poverty in the State.

Political: The conflict could present additional security challenges for the State. It could cause the proliferation of local militias and vigilantes as self-help mechanisms. This could result in extra-judicial killings and cause social unrest including mob violence and protests.

Fatalities Heat Map of Conflicts over Access to Land in Rivers State, Nigeria



Heat Map shows concentration of reported fatalities caused by land conflicts in Rivers State from January 2018 - September 2021. Sources: All data sources formatted on the P4P Peace Map www.p4p-nigerdelta.org

Prognosis

The herder-farmer conflict has the potential to escalate in ways that could adversely affect human and food security in the State. Peace actors should work with the state chapters of the Miyetti Allah Cattle Breeders Association of Nigeria (MACBAN) and the All Farmers Association of Nigeria (AFAN) to de-escalate the situation, and work with community leaders to set up a Farmer-Herder Conflict Early Warning System. Stakeholders should also work with the State government to curtail the criminal aspects of the conflict.

Contact Us

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Report Incidents: IPDU Early Warning System

Please report any verified incident of conflict to the IPDU SMS early warning system: Text report to **080 9936 2222**

Incident Details: Kindly include the State, LGA, Town, Date, and Brief Incident Description.



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