

# Niger Delta Weekly: Spotlighting Indigenous Land Ownership Disputes in Edo State

August 15-21, 2021

## Description

This weekly update spotlights Land conflict in the Niger Delta with a focus on rising tensions over indigenous land ownership disputes in Edo State. Conflict over indigenous land ownership between the Bini, Itsekiri and Ijaw ethnic groups has been a major cause of lethal violence and communal instability in Edo State. According to data (see map below), land related communal conflicts caused over 140 fatalities in Edo State between January 2017 and June 2021. Recent incidents indicate growing tensions between ethnic groups over indigenous land ownership disputes in the State. In March 2020, for example, two persons were reportedly killed and several others injured during clashes between Itsekiri and Bini youths over a land dispute in Ologbo community, Ikpoba-Okha LGA. More recently, on August 6, 2021, a resident was reportedly killed, another injured, and houses and livestock destroyed during clashes over land ownership disputes between the Ijaw and Bini ethnic groups in Ikoro and Obazuwa communities, Ovia North East LGA. The incident has intensified communal tensions in the area, raising fear of reprisals.

## Why it Matters

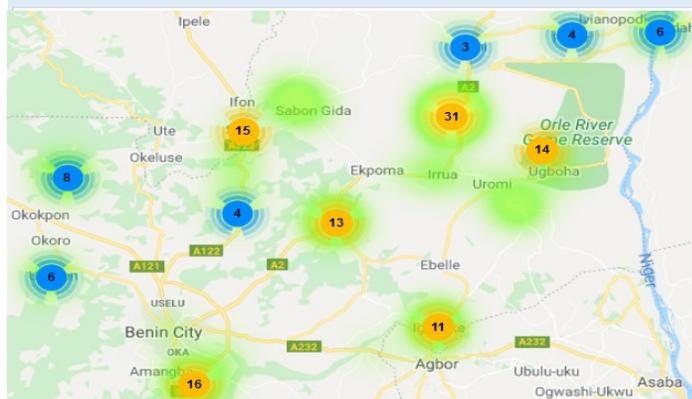
Growing incidents of conflict over indigenous land ownership claims could intensify ethnic tensions and hostilities in a way that could trigger a cycle of violence and reprisal killings in the State. Conflict over indigenous land ownership could degenerate into discriminatory classification of residents into indigenous and settler communities. This could negatively affect ethnic and communal relations in the State, with far-reaching socio-political and economic ramifications.

**Social:** Conflict over indigenous land ownership claims could have devastating impact on communal peace and stability. It could intensify communal and ethnic animosity and thus impede inter-ethnic relations. This could also impact the local conflict dynamics by encouraging the creation of ethnic and communal militias which can trigger a series of killings, plundering and internal displacement in the State.

**Economic:** Communal conflict over land ownership could be economically devastating for the State, especially considering that land is the mainstay of the local economy. Disputes over land ownership could discourage farming by limiting access to land. This could reduce agricultural output, household income, and undermine the agro-allied sector. This can also cause food insecurity and rural poverty.

**Political:** Conflict over indigenous land ownership could destabilize local politics and governance in the State, especially given that land is not only an economic asset, but also the basis of communal identity and political representation. The conflict could be exploited by politicians to cause ethnic divisions as a means of political mobilization.

## Fatalities Heat Map of Communal Conflict over Land Ownership in Edo State, Nigeria



Heat Map shows concentration of reported fatalities caused by clashes over land disputes in Edo State from January 2017 - June 2021. Sources: All data sources formatted on the P4P Peace Map [www.p4p-nigerdelta.org](http://www.p4p-nigerdelta.org)

## Prognosis

Indigenous land ownership disputes remain recurrent with occasional incidents of violence and killings in the State. Peace and development actors should work with the State government to identify and address the underlying drivers of the conflict. Stakeholders should also collaborate with the State government and community leaders to set up a conflict resolution committee and create a community-based conflict early warning system to proactively identify and respond to potential triggers of communal conflict in the State.

## 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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