

Niger Delta Weekly: Preventing Illegal Oil Refining Related Fire Outbreaks in the Niger Delta

August 21-27, 2022

Description

This special edition of the weekly update spotlights human-induced environmental disasters in the Niger Delta with a focus on illegal artisanal oil refining related fire outbreaks in the region. According to data (see map below), illegal artisanal oil refining related violence and disasters caused over 900 fatalities in the Niger Delta between January 2018 and June 2022. Recent data also indicates an upsurge in illegal oil refining related fire outbreaks in the region. In April 2022, for instance, over 100 persons were reportedly killed and several vehicles burned in an explosion at an illegal artisanal oil refinery in Abaezi community in Ohaji/Egbema LGA, Imo State. In May, 10 persons were reportedly killed in a fire outbreak at an illegal oil refinery in Uzuaku community in Ukwa West LGA, Abia State. In August, a tanker that was allegedly used to convey illegal petroleum products reportedly exploded and killed six residents in Eteo community in Eleme LGA, Rivers State. Recently, on August 21, 2022, six persons were reportedly killed in a fire outbreak at an illegal artisanal oil refinery in Owaza community in Ukwa West LGA, Abia State.

Why it Matters

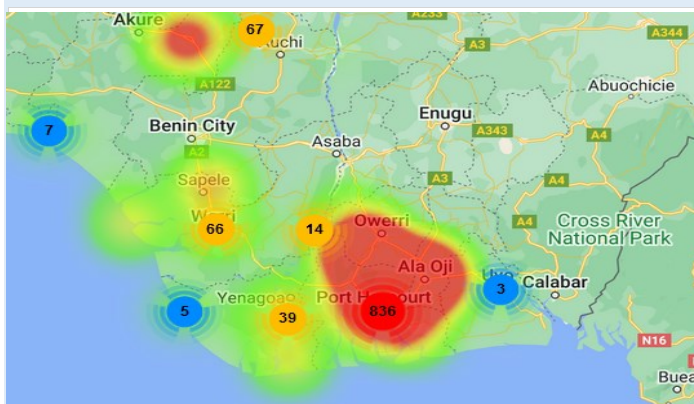
The growing spate of illegal artisanal oil refining related explosions and fire outbreaks is worrying, especially considering that such incidents usually result in many human fatalities, destruction of vegetation and natural habitats, and environmental pollution. The prevailing situation could intensify the devastation of the traditional livelihoods of farming and fishing, and thus worsen human insecurity. This could have serious socio-economic and political repercussions in the region.

Social: The rising spate of illegal oil refining related explosions and fire outbreaks could have devastating impacts on the lives, safety and health of residents. It could intensify environmental degradation including soot pollution which could cause skin diseases and respiratory track infections in the region. Recurrent incidents of explosion and fire outbreak could also cause internal displacements and social dislocations which could escalate communal tensions and insecurity.

Economic: Recurrent fire outbreaks could bring about harsh economic consequences for individuals, businesses and the government. Illegal oil refining related fire outbreaks usually result in loss of lives and properties, and the disruption of livelihoods. It could also result in shut-ins and shut-downs of operations by oil companies, and consequently cause loss of revenue to businesses and the government.

Political: Illegal artisanal oil refining activities and related fire disasters could present additional environmental security challenges for the government. Recurrent fire outbreaks could intensify environmental pollution including the menace of soot pollution in the region.

Fatalities Heat Map of Illegal Oil Bunkering and Artisanal Refining in the Niger Delta of Nigeria



Heat Map shows geographical concentration of artisanal oil refining related fatalities in the Niger Delta from January 2018 - June 2022. Sources: All data sources formatted on the P4P Peace Map www.p4p-nigerdelta.org

Prognosis

Illegal artisanal oil refining related fire disasters could intensify human insecurity in the Niger Delta. Stakeholders should work with the government to integrate artisanal refining into the mainstream oil and gas sector through modular refineries. Stakeholders should leverage the Host Community Development Trust Fund (HCDF) to address the underlying socio-economic and political dynamics of illegal oil refining. Stakeholders should also raise public awareness of the negative effects of illegal artisanal oil refining in the region.

Contact Us

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Incident Details: Kindly include the State, LGA, Town, Date, and brief incident description.



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