

Niger Delta Annual Conflict Report

January to December 2019

Executive Summary

There were a number of changes in the Niger Delta peace and conflict landscape in 2019. A variety of interrelated and often overlapping conflict risk factors contributed to the changing conflict and security dynamics during the period. These conflict risk factors included historical tensions and a proliferation of armed groups (militant, criminal, and ethno-sectarian). This report examines the trends and patterns of conflict risk and violence, and identifies key interrelated drivers and pressures on peace and stability at the regional, state and local levels. Data sources include ACLED (www.acleddata.com), Nigeria Watch (www.nigeriawatch.org), CIEPD (<https://ciepdcwc.crowdmap.com>), IPDU SMS early warning system, and others.

According to data (www.p4p-nigerdelta.org), there was an increase in conflict risk and lethal violence in the Niger Delta in 2019, compared to the trend in 2018. Organized criminality, cult clashes, political tensions, land disputes and communal clashes were the primary causes of lethal violence during the period. Gang and political violence increased while communal violence decreased during the year. Other key conflict and security issues in 2019

include robbery, rival cult clashes, kidnapping, piracy, counter-insurgency operations, extra-judicial killings, ethno-nationalist agitations, mob violence, killing for ritualistic purposes, human trafficking, political tensions, violent protests, as well as domestic and sexual violence.

Gang violence, militancy/counter-insurgency operations, and communal conflict were the most lethal types of violence in 2019, as measured by fatalities per incident. According to data (see second graph on page 4), on the average, every incident of gang violence and militancy/counter-insurgency resulted in at least three fatalities. This was closely followed by inter-communal conflict with an average of 2.5 fatalities per incident.

Overall, the most reported incidents of violence related to criminality (including piracy, abductions, robberies, and killing for ritualistic purposes), with 444 fatalities in 260 incidents. This was followed by gang/cultists supremacy clashes with 272 fatalities in 78 reported incidents. Gang violence was reported in all the states in the region, but it was more prevalent in Rivers, Edo, and Delta.

Communal/ethnic tensions was the third highest conflict issue in the region during the year, resulting in 197 fatalities in 77 reported incidents. These incidents included land disputes, farmer/herder conflicts, and ethnic separatist agitation.

Political and election violence also caused over 100 fatalities during the period, especially in Rivers, Delta, and Bayelsa state. In the run-up to, and during the 2019 general elections, political tension was elevated in the Niger Delta. In February, for instance, 56 fatalities were reported in the region during the general elections.

The hotspots of conflict in the region remained largely unchanged in 2019, compared to 2018. According to data (www.p4p-nigerdelta.org), the most violent states during the period, based on the number of reported conflict fatalities, were Rivers, Delta, Edo, and Cross River, respectively.

The most violent local government areas (LGAs) in 2019 were Khana (Rivers), Oredo (Edo), Obio/Akpor (Rivers), Yenagoa (Bayelsa), Odukpani (Cross River), Mbo (Akwa Ibom), Emohua (Rivers) and Ethiope East

Contributors: Afeno Odomovo, Nkasi Wodu, David Udofia, Africas Lawal



Regional Dynamics of Conflict Risk and Insecurity

The Niger Delta of Nigeria is highly diverse with over 40 ethnic groups who speak more than 100 languages and dialects. The region comprises 185 out of the 774 local government areas and covers nine out of the 36 states of Nigeria: Abia, Akwa Ibom, Bayelsa, Cross River, Delta, Edo, Imo, Ondo and Rivers. With over 30 million people, according to a 2006 population census, and an estimated population density of 265 people per square kilometer, the region accounts for more than 23 percent of Nigeria’s population.

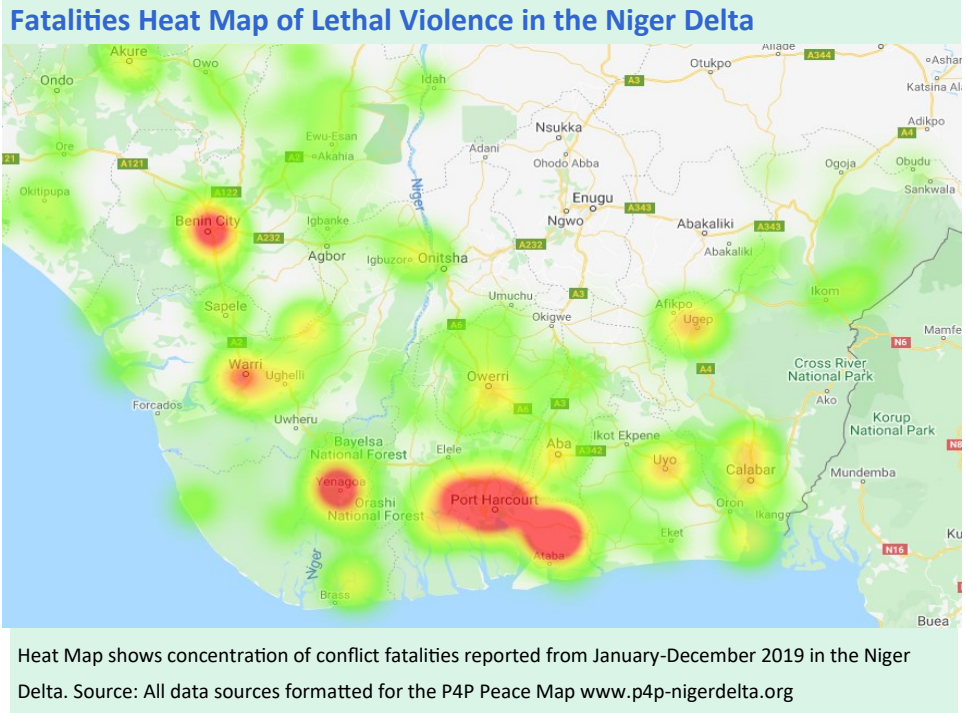
The Niger Delta area contains vast reserves of oil and gas, which play an important role in the Nigerian economy. In spite of these abundant natural resources, the Niger Delta is marked by poverty, economic underdevelopment, inequality, and environmental degradation. Historical tensions and a proliferation of armed groups (militant, criminal, and ethno-sectarian) contribute to the changing conflict and security dynamics in the region.

Since 2009 when the federal government commenced a Presidential Amnesty Program for militants, the peace and conflict landscape in the Niger Delta has undergone significant changes. The relative stability gained through the amnesty program has been eroded by the reemergence of other forms of violent conflict in the region. Conflict issues include communal tensions, political competition, organized criminality, and resource-based conflicts. Incidents include militancy, piracy, cultism, election violence, communal

violence, armed robbery, kidnapping, human trafficking, mob violence, and land disputes.

According to data (www.p4p-nigerdelta.org), while the nature of violence in the region varies, organized criminality, cult clashes, political tensions, land disputes and communal clashes remain the primary causes of lethal violence in 2019. Data sources include ACLED (www.acleddata.com), Nigeria Watch (www.nigeriawatch.org), VAWG (focused on Violence Against Women and Girls), the IPDU SMS early warning system, CIEPD, and others.

This annual report looks at the trends and patterns of conflict risk factors and incidence of violence, and the related pressures on peace and stability in the Niger Delta. The report is not designed as a conflict analysis, but rather it is intended to update stakeholders on the annual patterns and trends in violence. An understanding of the deeper conflict drivers and related impact, allows stakeholders to proactively address emerging trends rather than only reactively respond to conflict incidents.



Regional Trends and Patterns in Conflict Risk and Violence — January to December 2019

There was an increase in conflict risk and lethal violence in the Niger Delta in 2019, compared to the trend in 2018. Cultism and political violence increased significantly, while communal violence decreased during the year. At the state level, there was an increase in cult related fatalities in Rivers and Edo during the period. However, the level of criminality remained largely unchanged during the year, compared to the trend in 2018.

The most violent month during the year was April, with a total of 150 reported fatalities. In one incident in April, for instance, 8 people were reportedly killed during clashes between rival cult groups in Rumuolumeni community in Obio/Akpor LGA, Rivers state. Separately, in April, 10 people were reportedly killed during a clash over a land

dispute between some communities in Obubra LGA, Cross River state and a neighboring community in Ikwo LGA, Ebonyi State.

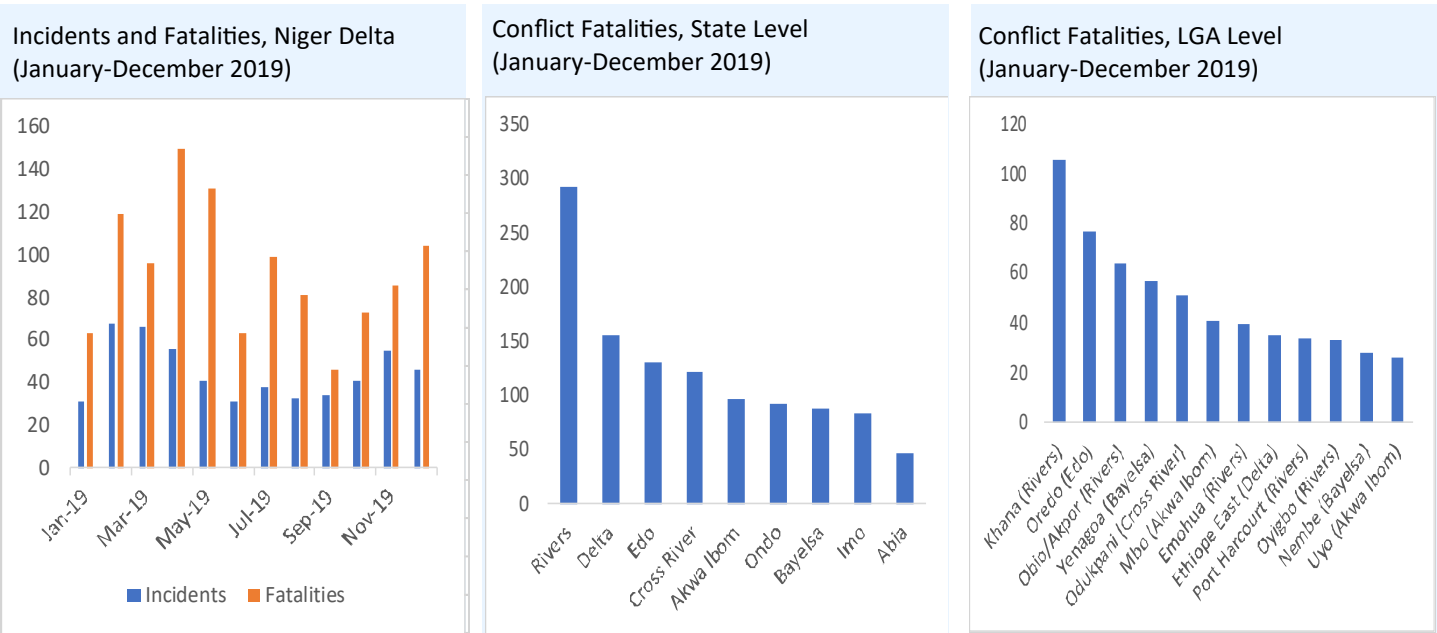
According to data (www.p4p-nigerdelta.org), the hotspots of conflict in the region remained largely unchanged during the year, compared to 2018. The most violent states during the year were Rivers, Delta, Edo, and Cross River. Criminality and cult related violence resulted in several dozen fatalities in Rivers, Delta and Edo. Additionally, communal conflict over land disputes caused over a hundred fatalities in Cross River. Political violence also resulted in dozens of fatalities in Rivers, Delta and Bayelsa during the period.

The most violent LGA in the region was

Khana in Rivers state, where several persons were reportedly killed during rival cult clashes.

Conflict risk and violence also impacted on the human rights of individuals during the period. Vigilante and mob violence was prevalent during the year, especially in Delta, Bayelsa, Imo and Rivers. Many of the criminal incidents and communal conflict also involved violence affecting women and girls (VAWG). In addition to the impact of criminal and communal violence on the safety and livelihoods of women and girls, domestic and sexual violence against women and girls were also prevalent during the year, particularly in Ondo, Imo, Edo, Delta, and Cross River.

The following pages provide a breakdown of prevalent conflict risk as it relates to the



Data for map and bar charts from ACLED and Nigeria Watch formatted and integrated on P4P Peace Map www.p4p-nigerdelta.org

Regional Trends and Patterns in Conflict Risk and Violence — January to December 2019

The Niger Delta conflict and security landscape in 2019 was dominated mainly by gang violence (clashes between rival cult gangs), organized criminality (including kidnapping, robbery, and piracy), communal conflict (including land disputes, farmer/herder clashes, and leadership tussles), political violence (including election violence and violent political rallies), and mob violence, as well as militancy/counter-insurgency.

The most lethal conflict issues in 2019, based on the average number of fatalities per incident were gang violence, militancy/counter-insurgency, communal conflict, mob violence, and criminality including

piracy and kidnapping for ransom.

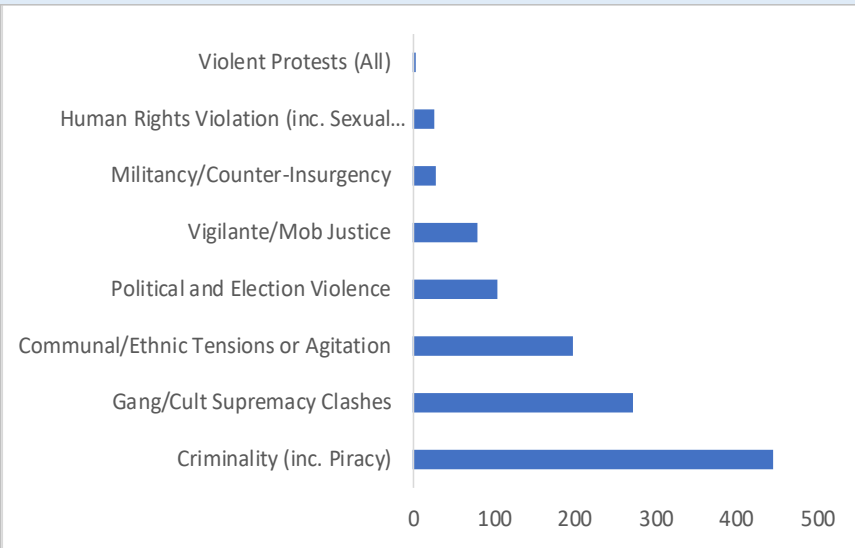
Gang and cult violence was widespread during the year, and resulted in several dozen fatalities in Rivers, Edo, Imo, Delta and Cross River, driven largely by rival cult clashes, and supremacy battles among rival cult groups, as well as communal conflict, political tensions and general criminality.

Public security forces' response to incidents of robbery, kidnapping and other organized criminality resulted in many fatalities during the year, particularly in Rivers and Delta state. In April, for instance, three policemen and a civilian were reportedly killed during a clash between a team of policemen and hoodlums in Iriebe community, Obio/Akpor

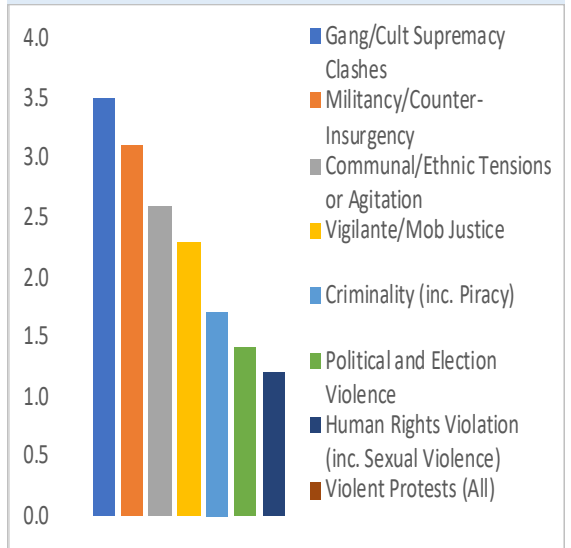
LGA, Rivers state.

Communal violence was prevalent in 2019, especially tensions over land, as well as herder/farmer clashes. Communal violence caused more fatalities per incident in 2019, compared to the trend in 2018. Communal conflict was prevalent in Cross River, Delta, Akwa Ibom, Edo, Imo and Ondo. In Cross River, communal violence was driven mainly by tensions over land and boundary disputes. Communal violence in Delta during the year was driven mainly by herder/farmer conflict and intra-communal tensions. In April, for instance, four people including a man with his wife and daughter were reportedly killed during a clash between herders and farmers in Abraka

Dominant Conflict Issues, Regional Level Fatalities (January-December 2019)



Most Lethal Conflict Issues, Fatalities Per Incident (January-December 2019)



Data for map and bar charts from ACLED and Nigeria Watch formatted and integrated on P4P Peace Map www.p4p-nigerdelta.org

Regional Drivers of Conflict Risk and Violence — Criminology

Criminology was a predominant security issue in the Niger Delta in 2019. Incidents of criminal violence during the year mainly involved armed robbery, kidnapping, piracy, and killing for ritualistic purposes. During the year, criminology reached the highest level in April, causing 69 fatalities in 32 incidents. Criminology was a key security issue in the entire region during the period, but it was more prevalent in Rivers, Delta and Edo state. Criminology was also widespread in Bayelsa, Ondo, and Imo during the period.

Rivers

Criminology in Rivers during the period related mainly to kidnapping for ransom and gun violence including piracy. Criminology was prevalent in Khana, Obio/Akpor, Port Harcourt, Emohua, and Degema LGAs. In January, for example, gunmen reportedly

hijacked a commercial bus, killed the driver and two passengers, and abducted the others in Rumuekpe community, Emohua LGA. In April, seven people including a police officer were reportedly killed by gunmen in Kaani Babbe community, Khana LGA. In November, pirates reportedly attacked a passenger boat and killed two people along Bille waterways in Degema LGA.

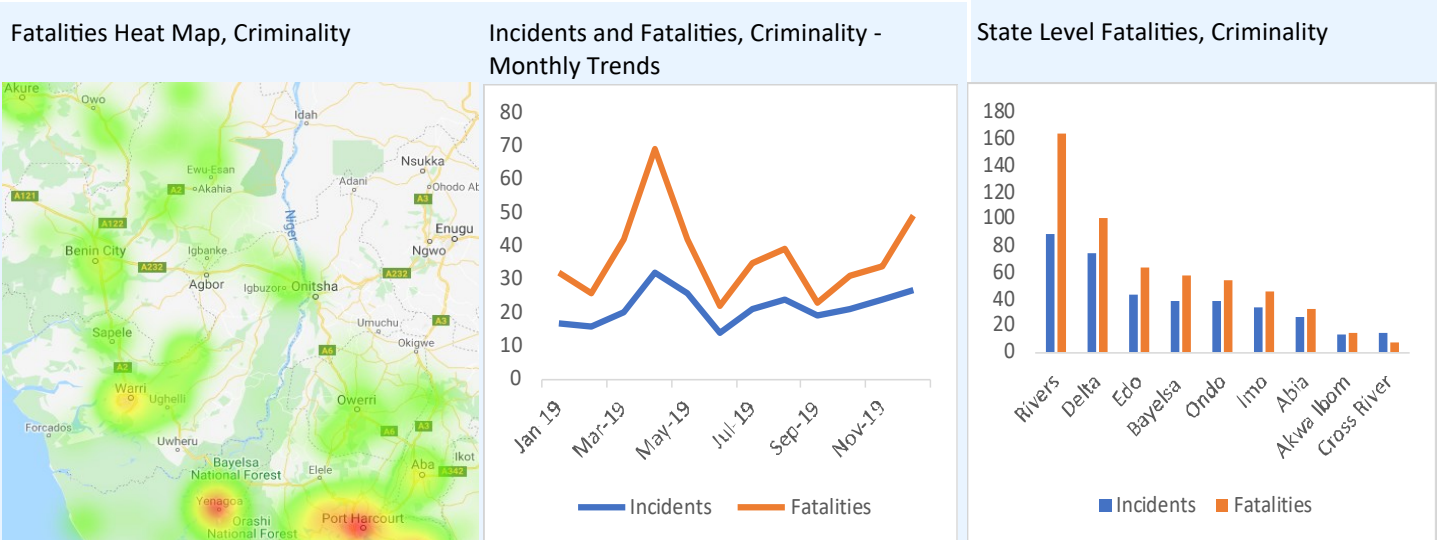
Delta

Criminology was widespread in the state during the period, especially in Ethiope East, Oshimili North, Aniocha North, Ughelli North, Warri South, Udu, and Sapele LGAs. Criminology in Delta during the period related mainly to armed banditry, kidnapping for ransom and killings for ritualistic purposes. In April, for instance, bandits reportedly attacked a policeman at a

security checkpoint and made away with his weapon in Asaba, Oshimili North LGA. In September, an Okada rider (commercial motorcyclist) was reportedly killed for ritualistic purposes in Oria Abraka community, Ethiope East LGA. Separately, in September, a lawyer was reportedly abducted by gunmen along the East-West Road in Ughelli North LGA.

Edo

Several incidents of criminology were reported in Edo state during this period, particularly in Oredo, Ikpoba-Okha, Ovia North-East, and Etsako West LGAs. Criminology in the state during the year related mainly to kidnapping and gun violence. In July, for example, gunmen reportedly kidnapped two Chinese and killed a policeman attached to the expatriates in Utesi town, Ikpoba-Okha LGA. In



Data for map and bar charts from ACLED and Nigeria Watch formatted and integrated on P4P Peace Map www.p4p-nigerdelta.org

Regional Drivers of Conflict Risk and Violence — Gang Violence

Gang violence was the most lethal conflict issue in the Niger Delta in 2019. There was an increase in gang and cult related incidents and fatalities in 2019, compared to 2018. Gang related incidents and fatalities were reported in all the states in the region, but it was more lethal and prevalent in Rivers, Edo, Delta, and Imo state, driven mainly by rival cult clashes and supremacy battles among the numerous cult groups in the region, as well as political tensions and general criminality.

Rivers

Gang violence was a key conflict risk and security issue in Rivers state during the year. Gang violence during the period was driven mainly by rival cult clashes, political tensions, communal conflict and armed clashes between community vigilante groups and members of the numerous cult groups in the state. Over 150 people were killed in cult related violence in the state, particularly in Khana, Obio/Akpor, and Emohua LGAs. In April, for instance, cultists reportedly killed eight people in a reprisal in

Mgbuoba community, Obio/Akpor LGA. Separately, in April, seven people were reportedly killed during a clash between two rival cult groups in Ibaa and Egbeda communities, Emohua LGA.

Cult violence during the year also involved attacks on communities and random killings of residents. In May, for instance, 14 persons were reportedly killed and many houses destroyed during a reprisal by members of the Icelander cult group in Kono Boue and Gbam Boue communities, Khana LGA. In October, three people were reportedly killed and several houses destroyed during clashes between members of two rival cult gangs in Ulakwo, Igbodo and Mba communities in Etche LGA.

Edo

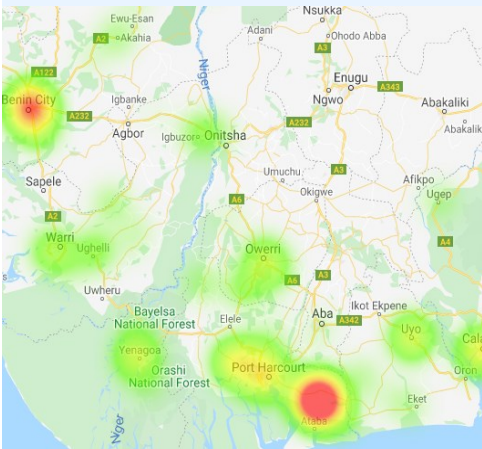
Gang violence was prevalent in Edo state during the year, driven mainly by gang wars and supremacy battles among rival cult groups. Many gang wars occurred in and around educational institutions in the state. Over 80 persons were killed in rival cult clashes during this period, particularly in

Benin City, Oredo LGA. In February, for instance, eight people were reportedly killed during a supremacy battle between two rival cult groups in Benin City, Oredo LGA. In May, 11 people were reportedly killed during clashes between members of the Eiyeye and Black Axe cult groups at different locations in Benin City. In September, a student was reportedly killed during a clash between rival cult gangs at a Polytechnic in Iyakpi community, Etsako West LGA.

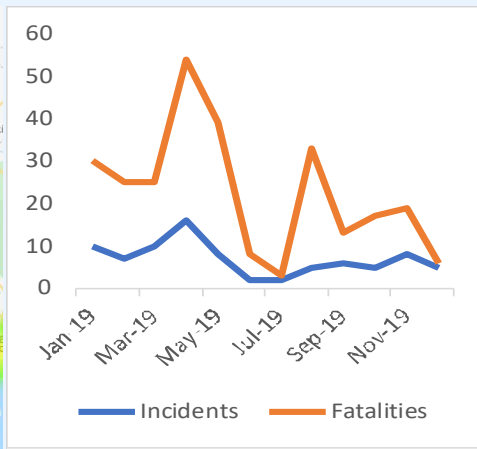
Delta

Gang violence caused several deaths in Delta state during the year, especially in Oshimili North, Ethiope East, Oshimili South, and Ughelli South LGAs. Gang violence was mainly driven by supremacy battles among rival cult gangs, as well as general criminality. In May, for instance, four persons were reportedly killed during a clash between members of two rival cult groups in Asaba town, Oshimili North LGA. In June, two persons were reportedly killed during a clash between rival cult gangs in Otu-Jeremi community, Ughelli South LGA.

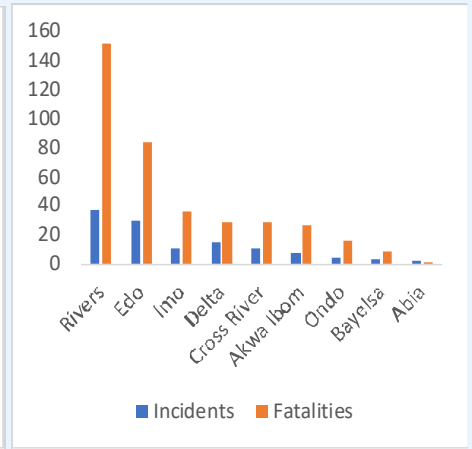
Fatalities Heat Map, Gang Violence



Incidents and Fatalities, Gang Violence - Monthly Trends



State Level Fatalities, Gang Violence



Data for map and bar charts from ACLED and Nigeria Watch formatted and integrated on P4P Peace Map www.p4p-nigerdelta.org

Regional Drivers of Conflict Risk and Violence — Communal Violence

There was a decrease in incidents of communal violence in the Niger Delta in 2019 but it caused more fatalities during the year, compared to 2018. In July, for instance, communal violence caused 60 fatalities in 10 incidents. Communal violence was reported in all the states in the region during the period, but it was more prevalent in Cross River, Delta, Rivers, and Akwa Ibom state. Communal violence caused over 190 fatalities during the year, and it was mainly driven by inter-communal tensions, land disputes and herder/farmer clashes.

Cross River

Communal conflict over land disputes resulted in several dozen fatalities in the state during the year, especially in Obubra, Odukpani, Abi, Biase, Yakurr, and Boki LGAs. Many of the incidents involved boundary disputes with communities in neighboring Akwa Ibom and Ebonyi state. In April, for instance, 10 people were reportedly killed during a clash over a land dispute between a group of communities in Obubra LGA, Cross River state and a community in Ikwo LGA, Ebonyi state. In July, 50 people were

reportedly killed, 10 communities destroyed and over 3,000 residents displaced as a result of communal clashes over land and boundary disputes in Odukpani LGA.

Delta

Communal violence was widespread in the state during the year, driven mainly by herder/farmer conflict, as well as in communal conflict relating to land dispute and leadership tussle. Several people were reportedly killed in clashes between farmers and herders in Ethiopie East, Ughelli North and Oshimili North LGAs. In February, for instance, two residents were reportedly killed and some houses destroyed during a clash between herders and farmers in Effurun-Otor community, Ughelli North LGA.

Also, communal violence over boundary disputes caused many fatalities in the state during the period, particularly in Warri South-West and Udu LGAs. In October, for example, militias allegedly from Aladja community in Udu LGA reportedly killed a man in Ogbeh-Ijoh community in Warri South-West LGA. The incident was reportedly connected to a longstanding conflict over a boundary dispute between the two

communities.

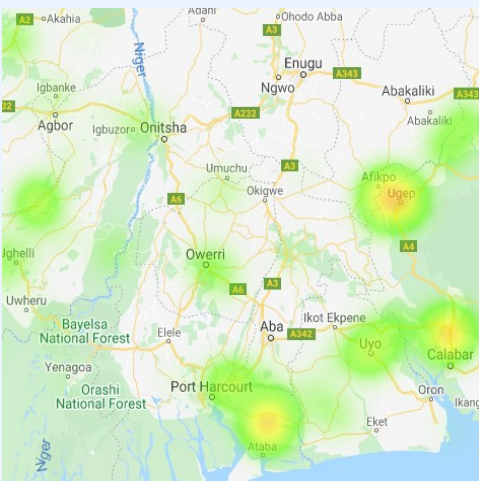
Rivers

Several people were reportedly killed in the state during the year in a series of incidents involving communal and criminal violence, particularly in Khana and Oyigbo LGAs. Communal violence during this period was mainly driven by leadership tussle, cult violence and criminality. In August, for instance, gunmen reportedly attacked a community, killed four residents and destroyed the palace of a traditional ruler in Taaba community, Khana LGA. Separately, gunmen attacked Azorgwu, Omarihu and Obete communities in Oyigbo LGAs and killed six residents.

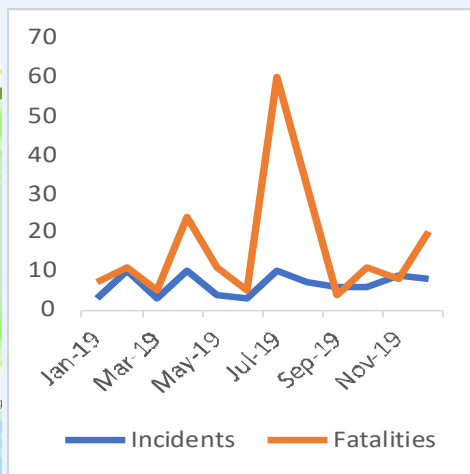
Akwa Ibom

Several incidents of communal conflict were reported in the state during the year, particularly clashes over land and boundaries disputes between communities in the state and neighboring Cross River state. In May, for example, eight people, including fishermen and farmers, were reportedly killed during a clash over a land dispute between Oku Iboku community in Itu LGA, Akwa Ibom state and neighboring Ikot

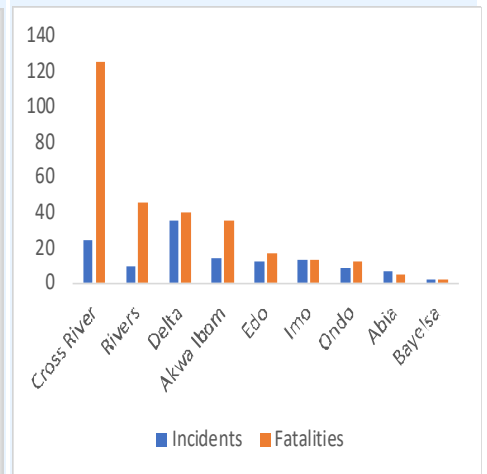
Fatalities Heat Map, Communal Violence



Incidents and Fatalities, Communal Violence - Monthly Trends



State Level Fatalities, Communal Violence



Data for map and bar charts from ACLED and Nigeria Watch formatted and integrated on P4P Peace Map www.p4p-nigerdelta.org ; www.acleddata.com

Regional Drivers of Conflict Risk and Violence — Political and Election Violence

There was a considerable increase in political and election related violence in the Niger Delta in 2019, compared to 2018. In the run-up to, and during the 2019 general elections, political violence caused several dozen fatalities, particularly in Rivers, Delta, and Bayelsa state. In February, for example, 56 fatalities were reported during the elections. Political and election violence were driven mainly by electoral misconduct, tension between political parties and supporters, and violent political rallies.

Rivers

Several incidents of political and election violence were reported in the state in 2019, particularly in Port Harcourt, Khana, Akuku-Toru, Ikwerre, and Degema LGAs. Political violence during this period involved mainly clashes between supporters of political parties, violent political rallies, and electoral misconduct including hijacking of voting materials. In February, for instance, four people were reportedly killed in a stampede during a political rally at a stadium in Port Harcourt LGA. In March, six people were reportedly killed by gunmen during elections in Khana LGA. Political and

election violence in the state during the period also involved clashes between rival cult groups. In March, for example, a resident was reportedly killed during a clash between rival cult groups supporting different political parties during elections in Omerelu community, Ikwerre LGA.

Delta

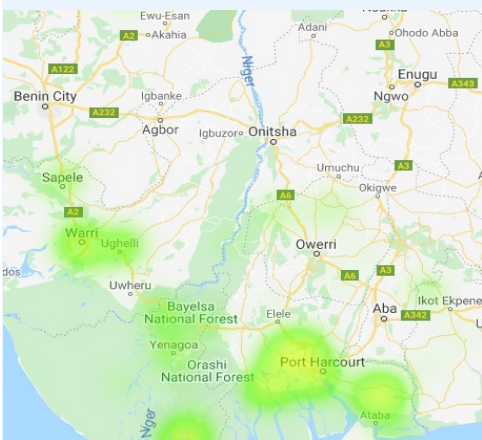
Political and election violence caused many fatalities in the state during the year, particularly in Ughelli South, Uvwie, Sapele, and Ethiope West LGAs. Incidents of political violence in the state during the period included clashes between supporters of political parties, violent political rallies and electoral misconduct. In February, for example, a Special Assistant to the Delta state governor was reportedly assassinated in Ekpan community, Uvwie LGA. In March, thugs reportedly attacked a voting center, killed two voters and hijacked voting materials in Oghara community, Ethiope West LGA. Separately, in March, gunmen reportedly killed a man at a voting center in Iwhrekan community, Ughelli South LGA.

Bayelsa

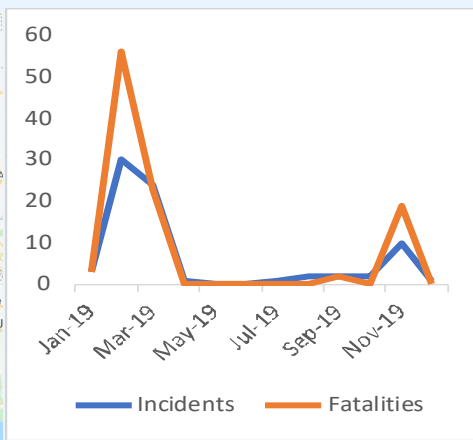
Political violence was prevalent in Bayelsa in 2019, driven mainly by tension between political parties and violent political rallies. Political violence during the year resulted in many fatalities in the state particularly in Yenagoa, Nembe, Ekeremor, Sagbama, Ogbia, and Southern Ijaw LGAs. In February, for instance, a ward chairman of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), and a Bayelsa state government house photographer were reportedly killed by political thugs in Oweikorogha community, Southern Ijaw LGA.

Political tension was also elevated in Bayelsa in the run-up to, and during the November 2019 off-cycle gubernatorial elections in the state. In August, for example, political thugs reportedly fired gunshots and detonated an explosive device close to a local secretariat of the PDP in Yenagoa, the state capital. In September, gunmen reportedly attacked the venue of the PDP's governorship primary elections in Nembe LGA. In November, one person was reportedly killed during a clash between APC and PDP supporters in Opolo commu-

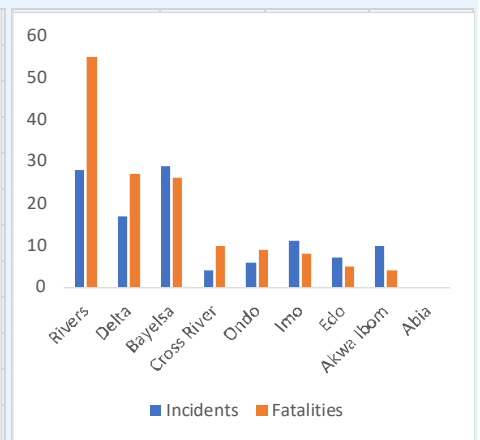
Fatalities Heat Map, Political Violence



Incidents and Fatalities, Political Violence - Monthly Trends



State Level Fatalities, Political Violence



Data for map and bar charts from ACLED and Nigeria Watch formatted and integrated on P4P Peace Map www.p4p-nigerdelta.org

Regional Drivers of Conflict Risk and Violence — Vigilante/Mob Violence

Vigilante/mob violence was a key security issue in the Niger Delta in 2019. There has been a steady rise in incidents of mob violence in the region since 2017. The rise in vigilantism and mob violence in the Niger Delta is the result of citizens’ distrust in the country’s security apparatuses and perceived weaknesses in the judicial and penal system. Individuals and communities in the Niger Delta resort to vigilantism and mob action as a way of responding to criminality and other misconducts instead of following the legal process.

Vigilante and mob related violence caused many fatalities in the Niger Delta in 2019, particularly in Delta, Bayelsa, Imo, and Rivers state. Vigilante/mob violence during the year was driven largely by criminality and rising insecurity in the region. In December, for instance, 27 fatalities were reported in eight incidents of mob violence in the region.

Delta

Several incidents of vigilante and mob violence were reported in Delta state during the year, especially in Ethiope East, Sapele,

Udu, Uvwie, and Ughelli South LGAs. In April, for instance, two robbery suspects were reportedly killed by vigilantes in Okpara-Inland, Ethiope East LGA. In November, two robbery suspects were reportedly burned to death by a mob in Ovwian town, Udu LGA. In December, a man was reportedly burned to death by a mob over alleged killings for ritualistic purposes in Otokutu community, Ughelli South LGA. The suspect was reportedly caught with human skulls.

Bayelsa

Mob violence was also prevalent in Bayelsa during the year, especially in Yenagoa and Ogbia LGAs. In April, for example, a mob reportedly killed two men who allegedly attempted stealing a child in Edepie community, Yenagoa LGA. In August, three robbery suspects were reportedly killed by a mob in Biogbolo community, Yenagoa LGA. The suspects were lynched after they had been arrested by members of a local vigilante group. In December, two kidnapping suspects were reportedly burned to death by a mob in Otuagala community, Ogbia LGA.

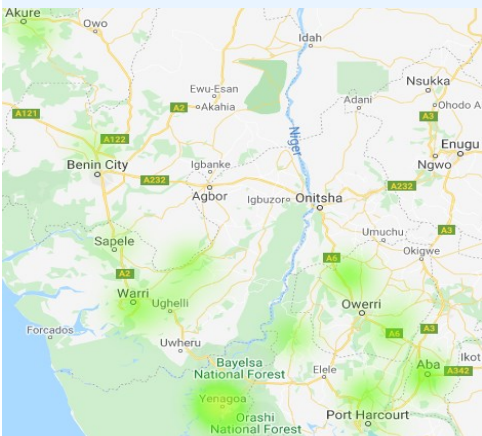
Imo

Mob violence caused some fatalities in Imo state during the period, particularly in Ngor Okpala and Oru East LGAs. In November, for instance, three robbery suspects were reportedly lynched by a mob in Umuohiagu community, Ngor Okpala LGA. The suspects were reportedly caught while vandalizing an electricity transformer in the community. In December, a man with a mental health disorder was reportedly killed by a mob in Nempi community, Oru West LGA. The man was killed after he reportedly went berserk and killed nine people including his grandfather and five of his cousins.

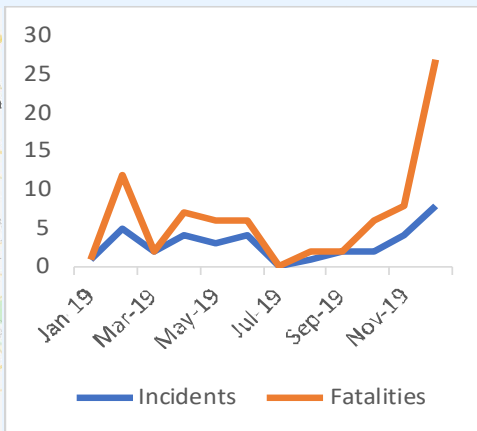
Rivers

There was a prevalence of juggle justice in Rivers state during the year, particularly killings by vigilantes. In December, for instance, a local vigilante group based in Ogba/Egbema/Ndoni LGA, under the auspices of ONELGA Security Planning and Advisory Committee (OSPAC), reportedly killed five criminal suspects in Okomoko community, Etche LGA.

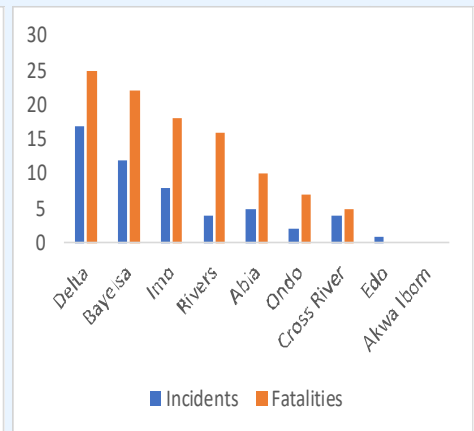
Fatalities Heat Map, Vigilante/Mob Violence



Incidents and Fatalities, Vigilante/Mob Violence - Monthly Trends



State Level Fatalities, Vigilante/Mob Violence



Data for map and bar charts from ACLED and Nigeria Watch formatted and integrated on P4P Peace Map www.p4p-nigerdelta.org

About Us

PIND



The Foundation for Partnership Initiatives in the Niger Delta (PIND) is a not-for-profit organization that develops innovative partnerships for peacebuilding and sustainable livelihoods in the Niger Delta. PIND has developed a Peace Map to bring together data on peace and conflict for validation, triangulation and multi-stakeholder collaboration.

NDPI



The Niger Delta Partnership Initiative (NDPI) is a U.S.-based not-for-profit organization that harnesses the power of the private and public sectors to help alleviate poverty and instability in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria through collaborative, market-based solutions that are community owned and implemented. NDPI work closely with her Nigeria-based implementing partner, the Foundation for Partnership Initiatives in the Niger

Delta (PIND).



The Projects

IPDU: The Integrated Peace and Development Unit (IPDU) of PIND responds to emerging threats and mobilizes appropriate actors and resources for preventive interventions.

P4P: Partners for Peace (P4P) is a network of peace actors whose mission is to build social capital around peacebuilding by amplifying the voices of positive actors, and collaborating on activities for conflict early warning

Contact Us

Inquiries



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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: **080 9936 2222**

Kindly include the State, LGA, Town, Date, and brief incident description