

Niger Delta Weekly: Preventing a Resurgence of Communal Violence in Cross River State

September 17-23, 2023

Description

This edition of the weekly update spotlights communal conflict in the Niger Delta with a focus on the resurgence of communal violence in Cross River State. Clashes over communal land and boundary disputes have been major causes of lethal violence and insecurity in Cross River State. According to data (see map below), communal violence caused over 100 fatalities in Cross River State between January 2021 and June 2023. Recent incidents indicate a resurgence of communal violence in the State. In August 2023, for instance, a group of armed youths led by a youth leader from a neighboring community reportedly killed a family head during a meeting in Bebuatswan village, Obudu LGA. In September, seven persons were reportedly killed, many others injured and over 15 houses destroyed during a clash over a boundary dispute between Ijiegua-Yache community in Yala LGA, Cross River State and Mbaaka community in Konshisha LGA, Benue State. Recently, on September 20, 2023, gunmen suspected to be local militias reportedly attacked residents and killed three persons in Utanga and other communities in Obalinku LGA.

Why it Matters

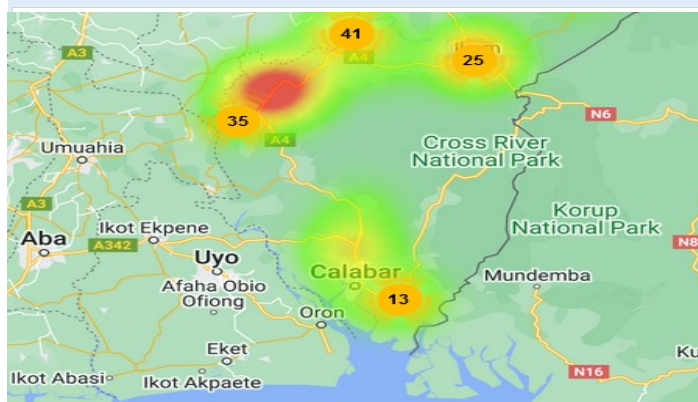
A resurgence of communal violence over land and boundary disputes has the potential to intensify communal and ethnic hostilities. Communal tensions and hostilities could negatively impact the dynamics of conflict and insecurity in the State. It could trigger a cycle of reprisal violence and killings and the proliferation of arms and local militias. This could bring about far-reaching socio-economic, humanitarian, political, and security consequences at the state and regional level.

Social: Renewed clashes over communal land and boundary disputes could have a devastating impact on communal peace and stability in the State. It could intensify ethnic and communal acrimony which could result in killings, plundering and internal displacement. A resurgence of land and boundary disputes could also encourage arms proliferation and the creation of communal militias. This could make the underlying drivers of the conflict more complicated and intractable.

Economic: Recurrent conflict over land and boundary disputes could be economically devastating, as land is the mainstay of the local economy. Clashes over land ownership could discourage farming by limiting access to land. This could cause food insecurity by disrupting agricultural livelihoods and agro-allied businesses. This could also cause poverty by reducing agricultural output and household income.

Political: Clashes over land and boundary disputes could destabilize local politics and governance, as land is not only an economic asset, but also the basis of communal identity, social legitimacy and political representation. This situation could be exploited by desperate politicians to cause ethnic divisions as a means of political mobilization.

Fatalities Heat Map of Communal Violence in Cross River State, Nigeria



Heat Map shows concentration of reported fatalities caused by communal violence in Cross River State from January 2021 - June 2023. Sources: All data sources formatted on the P4P Peace Map www.p4p-nigerdelta.org

Prognosis

Conflict over land and boundary disputes is a major driver of lethal violence and insecurity in Cross River State. The geographical location of the State - bordering Abia, Akwa Ibom, Ebonyi and Benue State - makes it susceptible to periodic land and boundary disputes. Stakeholders should collaborate with the state government and community leaders to develop policies to holistically address the situation. Interestingly, civil society organizations are leveraging traditional institutions to address some underlying conflict drivers.

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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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