

Niger Delta Annual Conflict Report

January to December 2018

Executive Summary

The Niger Delta peace and conflict landscape underwent significant changes in 2018. Diverse, 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, 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 a shift in the trends and patterns of conflict risk and violence in the Niger Delta in 2018, compared to the previous year. There was a decrease in conflict and lethal violence in the region in 2018, compared to the trend in 2017. Criminality and communal violence decreased, while gang violence and militancy increased during the year.

Other key conflict issues in 2018 include robbery, rival cult clashes, kidnapping, piracy, counter-insurgency operations, ethno-nationalist agitations, mob violence, killing for ritualistic purposes, human trafficking, political tensions, violent protests, as well as domestic and sexual violence.

Gang violence and communal conflict were the most lethal types of violence in 2018, as measured by fatalities per incident. According to data (see second graph on page 4), on the average, every incident of gang violence and inter-communal conflict resulted in at least two fatalities. This was closely followed by militancy/counter-insurgency with an average of 1.8 fatalities per incident.

Overall, the most reported incidents of violence related to criminality (including piracy, abductions, robberies, and killing for ritualistic purposes - but excluding cultist supremacy battles), with 546 fatalities in 351 incidents. This was followed by communal/ethnic tensions with 357 fatalities in 142 reported incidents. These incidents included land disputes, farmer/herder conflicts, and ethnic

separatist agitation.

Gang/cultist supremacy battles was the third highest conflict issue in the region during the period, resulting in 174 fatalities in 66 reported incidents. Gang violence was reported in all the states in the region, but it was more widespread in Rivers, Delta, Bayelsa, and Edo state.

Militancy also caused about 70 fatalities during this period, especially in Bayelsa, Akwa Ibom and Delta state, driven mainly by criminality, attacks by militants and counter-insurgency operations of security forces.

The hotspots of conflict in the region remained largely unchanged in 2018, compared to 2017. 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, Cross River, and Edo, respectively.

The most violent local government areas (LGAs) in 2018 were Arochukwu (Abia), Port Harcourt (Rivers), Oredo (Edo), Etim Ekpo (Akwa Ibom), Udu (Delta), Yenagoa (Bayelsa), Ogba/Egbema/Ndoni (Rivers), and Ekeremor (Bayelsa), respectively.



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 changing conflict and security dynamics in the region.

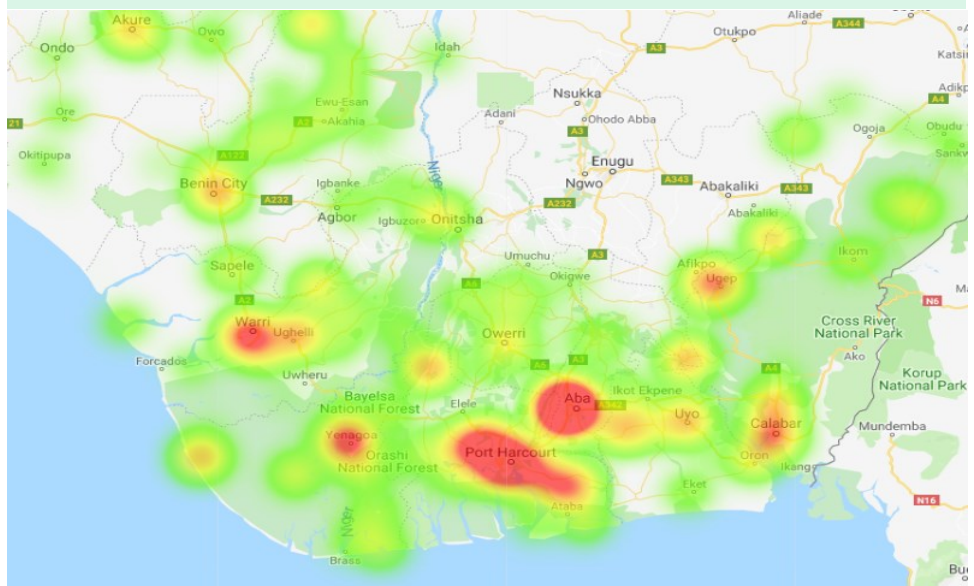
Since 2009 when the federal government commenced a Presidential Amnesty Program for militants, the peace and conflict landscape in the Niger Delta has undergone significant changes. The relative stability gained through the amnesty program has been eroded by the reemergence of other forms of violent 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, land disputes and communal clashes remain the primary causes of lethal violence in 2018. 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 incidents 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.

Fatalities Heat Map of Lethal Violence in the Niger Delta



Heat Map shows concentration of conflict fatalities reported from January-December 2018 in the Niger Delta. Source: All data sources formatted for the P4P Peace Map www.p4p-nigerdelta.org

Regional Trends and Patterns in Conflict Risk and Violence — January to December 2018

There was a decrease in conflict risk and lethal violence in the Niger Delta in 2018, compared to the trend in 2017. Criminality and communal violence decreased, while cultism and militancy increased during the year. However, militancy and cult related violence did not cause as many fatalities in 2018 compared to the trend in 2017. Cult related violence in Rivers, for instance, increased in 2018 but it did not cause as many fatalities compared to the trend in 2017.

The most violent month during the year was May, with a total of 169 fatalities. In one incident in May, for instance, 30 fishermen were reportedly killed during a clash over a boundary dispute between Oku Iboku community in Itu LGA, Akwa Ibom state and a community in neighboring Cross River state. Separately, in May, 10 people were

reportedly killed during clashes over territorial control between the Greenlanders and the Bobos cult groups in Yenagoa, the Bayelsa state capital.

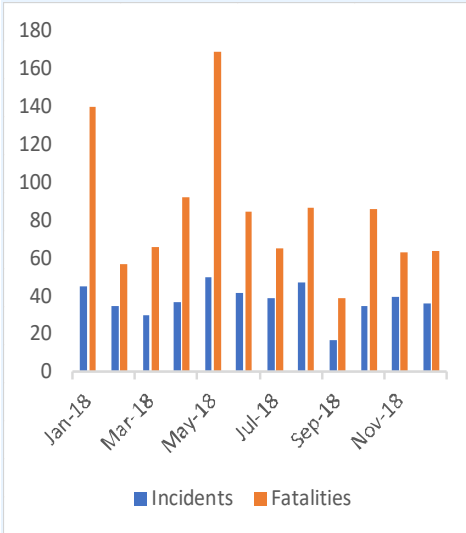
According to data (www.p4p-nigerdelta.org), the hotspots of conflict in the region remained largely unchanged during the period, compared to 2017. The most violent states during the year were Rivers, Delta, Cross River, and Edo. Communal conflict over land disputes resulted in several dozen fatalities in Cross River, Delta and Abia. Additionally, criminality and cult related violence caused dozens of violent fatalities in Rivers state during the year.

The most violent LGA in the region was Arochukwu, Abia state, where several persons were reportedly killed during a communal clash.

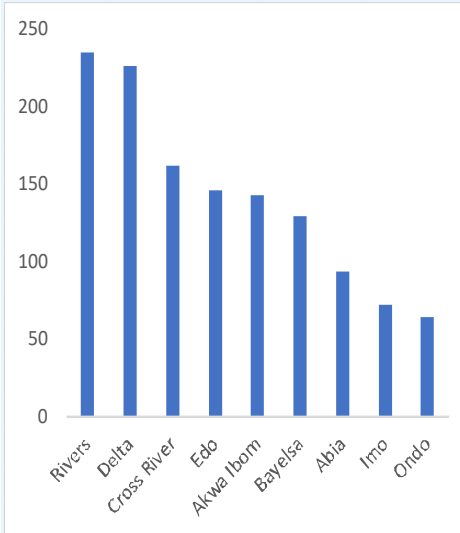
Conflict risk and violence also impacted on the human rights of individuals during the period. Several incidents of mob violence were reported during the year, especially in Delta, Akwa Ibom and Cross River. Many of the criminal incidents and communal conflict involved violence affecting women and girls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

The following pages provide a breakdown of prevalent conflict risk as to the main issues reported in 2018 and the key conflict drivers.

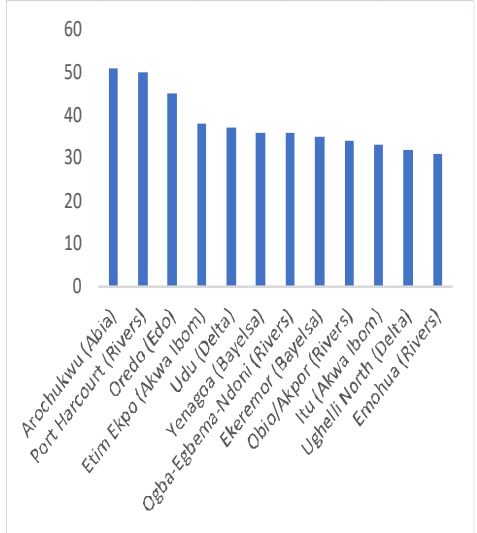
Incidents and Fatalities, Niger Delta (January-December 2018)



Conflict Fatalities, State Level (January-December 2018)



Conflict Fatalities, LGA Level (January-December 2018)



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 2018

The Niger Delta conflict landscape in 2018 was dominated mainly by organized criminality (including kidnapping, robbery, and piracy), communal conflict (including land disputes, farmer/herder clashes, and leadership tussles), gang violence (rival cult clashes), militancy/counter-insurgency, political and mob violence, as well as human rights issues and protests.

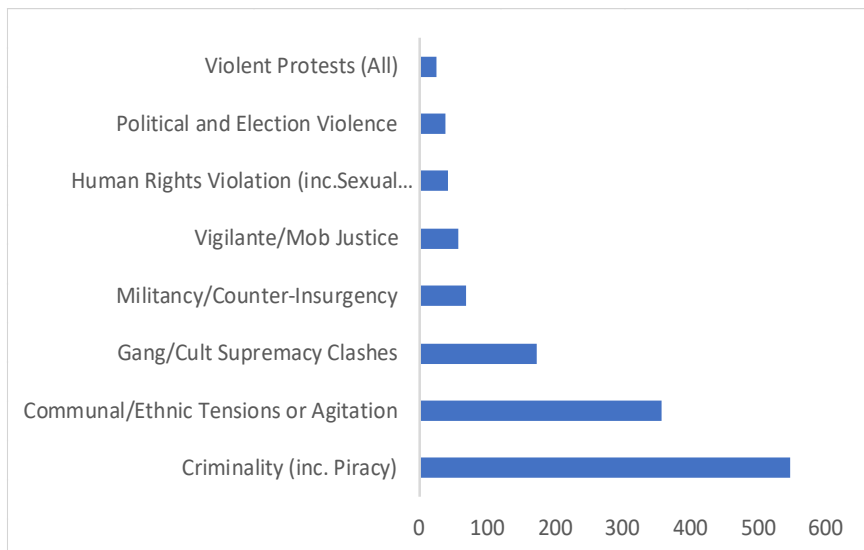
The most lethal conflict issues in 2018, based on the average number of fatalities per incident were gang violence, communal conflict, militancy/counter-insurgency, mob violence, and criminality including piracy and kidnapping for ransom.

Gang violence was widespread during the year, and resulted in several fatalities in Rivers, Edo, Delta, Bayelsa, Cross River and Akwa Ibom, driven largely by rival cult clashes, and supremacy battles among the numerous rival cult groups in the region, as well as political tensions and general criminality.

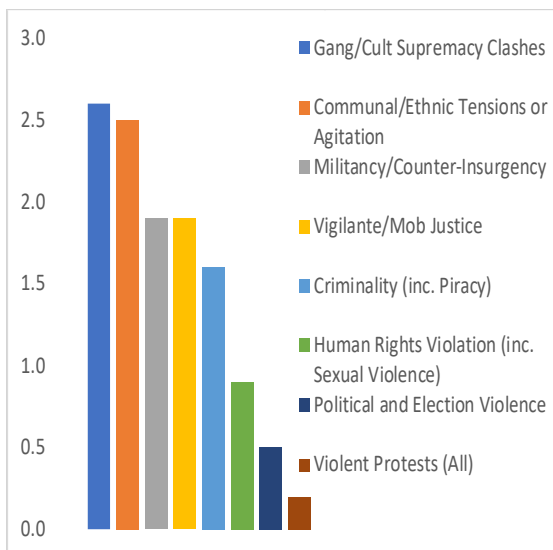
The response of the public security forces to the spate of robbery, kidnapping and other organized criminality resulted in multiple fatalities during the year, particularly in Rivers, Delta, Abia and Akwa Ibom. In July, for instance, five policemen were reportedly killed by hoodlums at different locations in Rivers state.

Communal violence was prevalent in 2018, especially tensions over land, as well as herder/farmer clashes. Communal violence was reported in all the states in the region, and it was the cause of several violent fatalities during the period. Communal conflict was widespread in Delta, Cross River, Edo and Ondo state. In Delta, dozens were reportedly killed in herder/farmer conflict, as well as in communal conflict relating to land dispute and leadership tussle. In Cross River, communal violence was mainly driven by tensions over land and boundary disputes. Communal violence in Edo and Ondo state during the year was driven mainly by herder/farmer conflict.

Dominant Conflict Issues, Regional Level Fatalities (January-December 2018)



Most Lethal Conflict Issues, Fatalities Per Incident (January-December 2018)



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 — Criminality

Criminality was a key conflict risk and security issue in the Niger Delta in 2018. Incidents of criminal violence during the period mainly involved kidnapping, robbery, and piracy. Criminality peaked in January, causing 72 fatalities in 25 incidents. Criminality was widespread in the entire region during the year, but it was more prevalent in Delta and caused more fatalities per incident in Rivers. Criminality was also rampant in Edo during the period.

Delta

Several incidents of criminality were reported in Delta, especially robbery, kidnapping for ransom, and gun violence. Criminality was prevalent in the state during the period, especially in Ughelli North, Oshimili South, Oshimili North, Ethiope West, Warri South, Ndokwa West, and Ethiope East

LGAs. For instance, in October, kidnappers reportedly abducted a female police officer in Aniocha South LGA. In May, kidnappers reportedly killed a former local government councillor after a ransom was collected from his family in Ethiope East LGA. Gun violence was also prevalent in the state during the period. In November, for example, a policeman was reportedly killed by gunmen at a security checkpoint in Ughelli North LGA.

Rivers

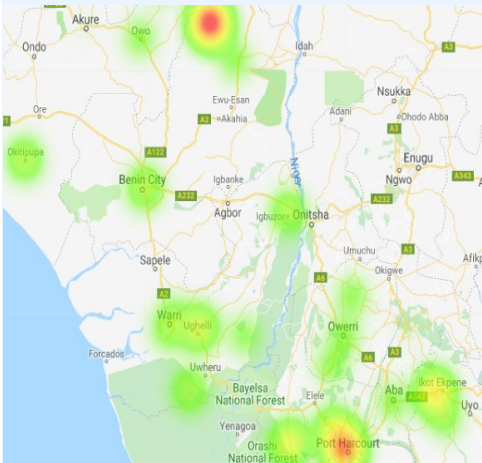
Criminality in Rivers during the period related mainly to gun violence and kidnapping for ransom. Criminality was prevalent in Port Harcourt, Obio/Akpor, Ikwerre, Emohua, Abua/Odual, and Ogba/Egbema/Ndoni LGAs. In January, for example, gunmen reportedly attacked a community and

killed 22 residents who were returning from a church service in Ogba/Egbema/Ndoni LGA. The attack was believed to be targeted at members of a community vigilante group who allegedly destroyed a house belonging to the mother of a prominent criminal in the area. In May, five policemen were reportedly killed by gunmen at different locations in Port Harcourt LGA.

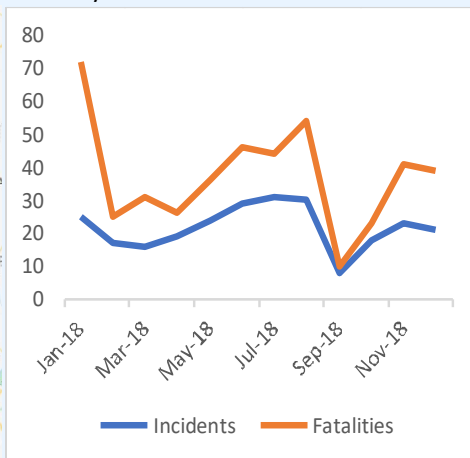
Edo

Criminality was also prevalent in Edo state during this period, particularly in Oredo, Ikpoba-Okha, Egor, and Akoko-Edo LGAs. In August, for instance, robbers reportedly killed 10 people including a policeman during an attempted bank robbery in Igarra community, Akoko-Edo LGA. In September, two people were reportedly stabbed to death by robbers in Oredo LGA.

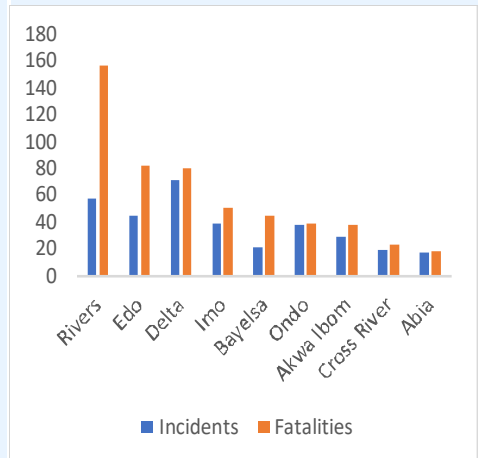
Fatalities Heat Map, Criminality



Incidents and Fatalities, Criminality - Monthly Trends



State Level Fatalities, Criminality



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 communal violence in the Niger Delta in 2018, compared to the trend in 2017. Communal violence was reported in all the states in the region during the period, but it was more prevalent in Cross River, Delta and Abia states. Communal violence was a major cause of numerous violent fatalities during the year, and it was driven mainly by inter-communal tensions and land disputes. In May, for instance, communal conflict caused 60 fatalities in eight incidents.

Cross River

Dozens were reportedly killed in communal conflict over land disputes during the year, especially in Odukpani, Biase, Obubra, Abi, Boki, Yala and Yakurr LGAs. Many of the conflicts involved boundary disputes with communities in neighboring Akwa Ibom and Ebonyi state. In May, for instance, 11 people, mainly women and children, were reportedly killed during renewed clashes over a boundary dispute between Ikot Offiong community in Odukpani LGA, Cross River state and Oku-Iboku community in Itu LGA, Akwa Ibom state. Separately, in June, 15 people were reportedly killed in renewed hostilities over a land

dispute between Ukele community in Yala LGA, Cross River state and Ibeagu community in Izzi LGA, Ebonyi state.

Delta

Communal conflict was prevalent in the state during the year. Dozens of people were reportedly killed in the state in herder/farmer conflict, as well as in communal conflict relating to land dispute and leadership tussle. Several people were reportedly killed in clashes between herders and farmers in Ughelli North, Aniocha North, Ika North, and Ethiopie East LGAs. In January, for instance, two villagers were reportedly killed by herdsmen in Ika North LGA. Separately, herdsmen reportedly killed a farmer and raped a woman in Aniocha North LGA. In March, herdsmen reportedly killed four men who were on a fishing expedition, and beheaded a farmer in Ughelli North LGA.

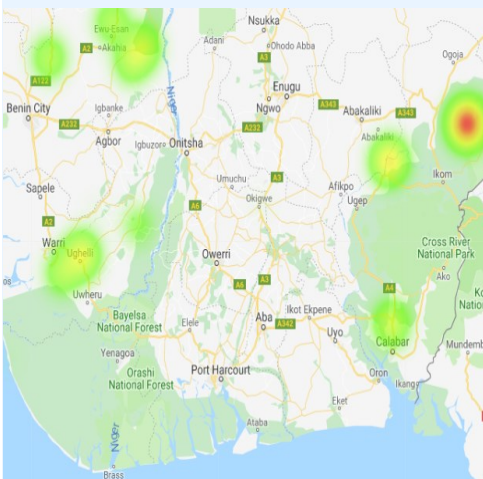
Also, communal tensions over boundary disputes and leadership tussles were key conflict issues in the state during the period, particularly in Warri South-West, Udu, Ughelli North, Ughelli South, Uvwie, Ndokwa East and Burutu LGAs. In January,

for example, five people were reportedly killed during a clash between rival youth factions over a leadership tussle in Uvwie LGA. In May, 18 people were reportedly killed during a clash over a boundary dispute between Aladja community in Udu LGA and Ogbe-Ijoh community in Warri South West LGA.

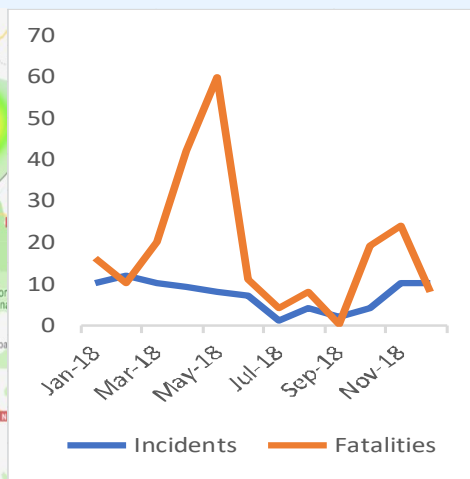
Abia

Communal conflict was a key conflict risk issue in the state during the year, especially in Arochukwu LGA. Some of the conflicts involved boundary disputes with communities in neighboring states. In April, for instance, 30 people were reportedly killed during a clash over a boundary dispute between Isu community in Arochukwu LGA, Abia state and Utuma community in Biase LGA, Cross River state. In May, 11 people were reportedly killed during renewed clashes over a land dispute between Isu community in Arochukwu LGA, Abia state and Utuma community in Biase LGA, Cross River state.

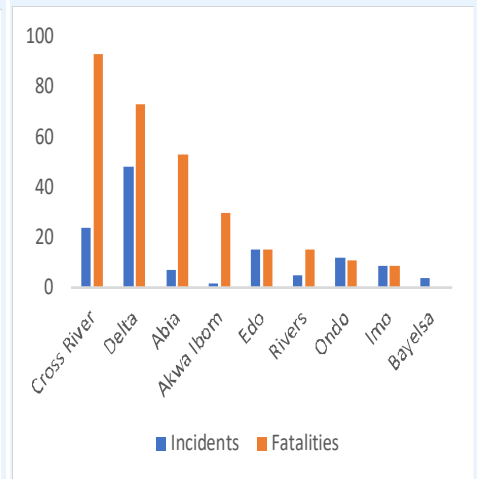
Fatalities Heat Map, Communal Violence



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 — Gang Violence

Gang violence was the most lethal conflict issue in the Niger Delta in 2018. There was a rise in incidents of gang violence and rival cult clashes in 2018. Gang related violence was more lethal in May and October, each with 33 fatalities. Gang related incidents and fatalities were reported in all the states in the region. Gang violence was more prevalent in Rivers, Delta, Edo, Cross River and Bayelsa states, driven mainly by rival cult clashes and supremacy battles among the numerous cult groups in the region, as well as general criminality.

Rivers

Gang violence was widespread in Rivers state during the year. Gang violence during this period was driven mainly by rival cult clashes, political tensions and armed clashes between community vigilante groups and members of the numerous cult groups in the state. Over 40 people were killed in cult related violence in the state, particularly in Port Harcourt, Emohua, Ikwerre, Obio/Akpor, and Andoni LGAs. In January, for

instance, seven people were reported killed during a gun battle between members of two rival cult groups in Andoni LGA. Cult violence during this period also involved attacks on communities, and random killing of residents. In August, for example, the chairman of a community vigilante group was reportedly ambushed and killed by cultists in Obio/Akpor LGA. In October, cultist reportedly killed the paramount ruler of a community in Emohua LGA. The cultists also killed two others in the community and took away their severed heads.

Delta

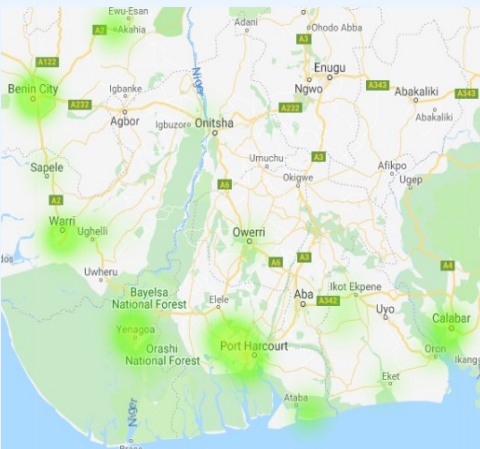
Gang violence caused several deaths in the state during the year, especially in Udu, and Ughelli North LGAs. Gang violence was mainly driven by supremacy battles among rival cult groups. In June, for instance, three people were reportedly killed during a clash between rival cult groups in Ovwian and Aladja communities in Udu LGA. The clash was reportedly triggered by a supremacy battle over the control of a motor park in the area.

In July, a 21-year old cultist was reportedly killed during a clash between rival cult groups in Ovwian town, Udu LGA. In December, two cultists were reportedly killed by members of a rival cult group in Agbarho, Ughelli North LGA.

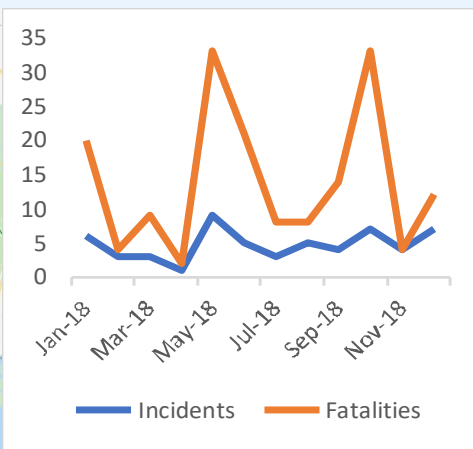
Edo

Gang violence was a key security issue in Edo state during the year, driven mainly by gang wars and supremacy battles among rival cult groups. Several people were killed in rival cult clashes in the state during this period, particularly in Oredo and Esan West LGAs. In September, for instance, six people were reportedly killed during rival cult clashes in Benin City, Oredo LGA. Separately, in September, six students were reportedly killed by cultists during a graduation ceremony at the Ambrose Alli University, Ekpoma, Esan West LGA. In October, over 20 people were reportedly killed in renewed rival cult clashes at different locations in Benin City and its environs in Oredo LGA.

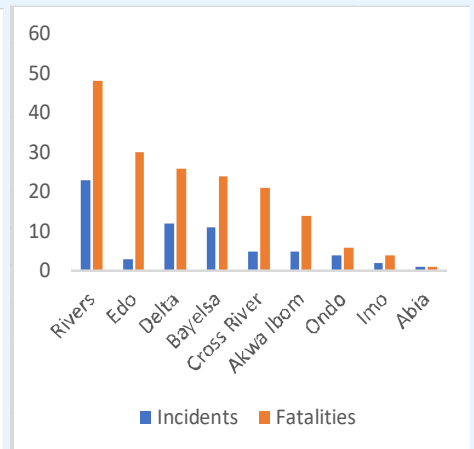
Fatalities Heat Map, Gang Violence



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 — Militancy/Counter-Insurgency

There was an increase in militancy in the Niger Delta in 2018, compared to the trend in 2017. Militancy caused several fatalities in the region during the year, particularly in Bayelsa, Delta and Akwa Ibom state. Violence and fatalities related to militancy were driven largely by criminality, attacks on oil and gas infrastructure by militants and counter-insurgency operations of public security forces. In January, for instance, 14 militants who double as kidnappers were reportedly killed during a gun battle with soldiers in Ekeremor LGA, Bayelsa state.

Bayelsa

Several incidents of militancy were reported in Bayelsa state in 2018, particularly in Ekeremor and Nembe LGAs. Militancy during this period involved mainly armed clashes between militants and public security forces. In January, for example, four soldiers and 14 militants were reportedly killed during a military operation against militants in Ekeremor LGA. The operation was initiated in response to the killing of a soldier by militants in the area. In March, a prominent militant who

doubles as a kidnapper was reportedly killed by operatives of the Inspector General of Police's Intelligence Response Team in Yenagoa, the state capital. The suspect was reportedly enrolled in the federal Government Amnesty program, but was secretly involved in militancy and extorting money from vessels along the Nembe Creek. In June, seven people, including a nursing mother and her six-month-old baby girl, were reportedly killed during a clash between militants and soldiers in Nembe LGA.

Akwa Ibom

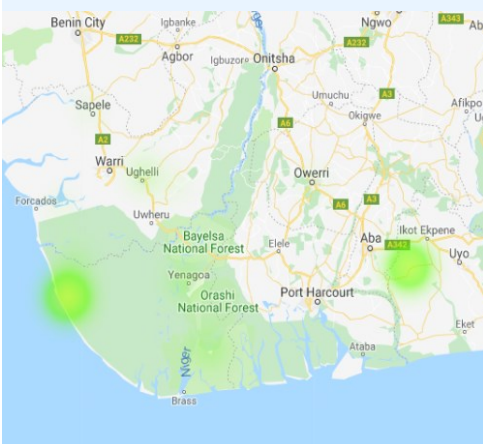
Several attacks by militants were reported in the state during the year, particularly in Etim Ekpo LGA. Militancy during the period involved mainly ambushes and armed clashes between militants and security forces. Clashes between militants and public security forces caused over 20 fatalities in the state during this period. Militancy during the period was driven mainly by criminality. In January, for instance, two militants who double as kidnappers were reportedly killed during a gun battle with soldiers in Etim Ekpo LGA. In July,

militants reportedly attacked the palace of a village head and killed four people in Ikot Ese village, Etim Ekpo LGA. In a related incident, militants reportedly ambushed soldiers at a security checkpoint and killed a soldier and five civilians in Iwukem community, Etim Ekpo LGA. In August, militants reportedly attacked a commercial bus, killed one and injured three others in Ikot Mkprikpo community, Etim Ekpo LGA.

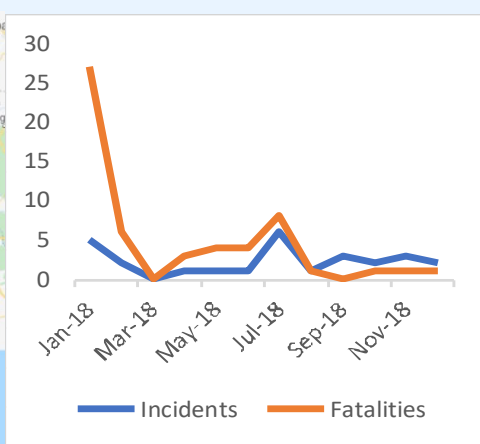
Delta

Militancy in Delta state during the year was driven mainly by criminality. Militant activities were closely linked with vandalism and kidnapping for ransom. In January, for instance, a prominent militant who doubles as a kidnap kingpin was reportedly killed during a gun battle between his gang and soldiers in Burutu LGA. The militant was reportedly part of kidnappers that abducted four British missionaries in the area. Separately, in January, five workers of an indigenous oil servicing firm were reportedly abducted by gunmen suspected to be militants at a waterside community in Warri North LGA.

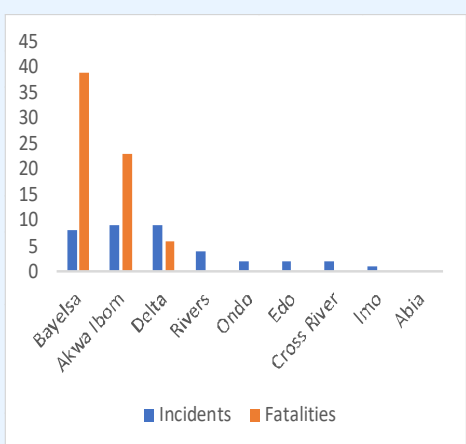
Fatalities Heat Map, Militancy/Counter-Insurgency



Incidents and Fatalities, Militancy/Counter-Insurgency - Monthly Trends



State Level Fatalities, Militancy/Counter-Insurgency



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 — Political Violence

There was an increase in political and election related violence in the Niger Delta in 2018 compared to the trend in 2017. Political and election related violence were more prevalent in Rivers, Delta, Abia, and Bayelsa states. Political and election violence were driven mainly by tension between political parties and aspirants, intimidation of political opponents, and violent political rallies.

Rivers

Many incidents of political and election violence were reported in Rivers state in 2018, particularly in Port Harcourt and Ikwerre LGAs. Political violence during this period involved mainly clashes between supporters of political parties, killing and intimidation of political opponents, violent political rallies, and hijacking of voting materials. For instance, a State House of Assembly bye-election conducted in Port Harcourt LGA in August was reportedly marred by violence characterized by sporadic shootings and hijacking of voting materials. In November, two supporters of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) were reportedly

shot dead during a political event in Ipo community, Ikwerre LGA. Over 30 gunmen reportedly invaded the venue of the political event, shot sporadically and vandalized many vehicles.

Delta

Political and election violence caused several fatalities in Delta state during the year, particularly in Oshimili South, Ughelli North, Ethiope East and Ndokwa West LGAs. In January, for instance, an ad hoc staff of the Delta State Independent Electoral Commission (DSIEC) was reportedly killed by political thugs during a local government council elections in Ughelli North LGA. In August, a secretariat of the All Progressive Congress (APC) was reportedly burned down by some aggrieved members of the party in Oleh, Isoko South LGA. In October, two people including a student were reportedly killed during a senatorial primary elections of the PDP in Oshimili South LGA. Separately, in October, a police vehicle was reportedly burned by political thugs during a State

House of Assembly primary elections of a popular political party in Isiokolo, Ethiope East LGA.

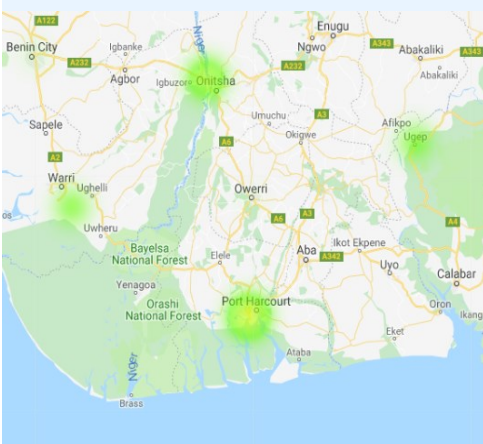
Abia

Political and election violence in Abia state during the period related mainly to criminality and tension between political groups, particularly in Osisioma Ngwa LGA. In September, for instance, 10 people were reportedly killed by hoodlums during a meeting of the APC in Okpuala Aro village, Osisioma Ngwa LGA. Several others were reportedly injured during the attack.

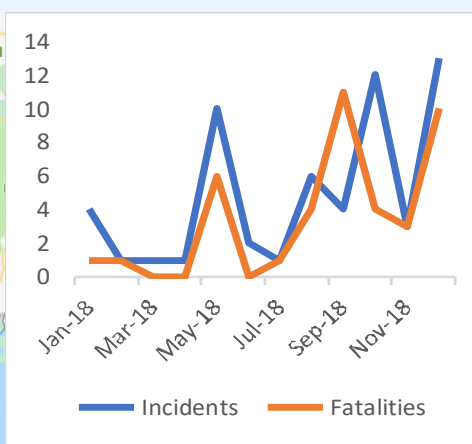
Bayelsa

Political violence was also prevalent in Bayelsa state during this period, particularly in Brass LGA. In February, for example, one person was reportedly killed and several others injured during a clash between youths belonging to different political parties in Okpoama, Brass LGA. In August, three people were reportedly killed during a clash between thugs belonging to the PDP and APC in Brass LGA. The clash allegedly resulted from a power tussle between two politicians in the area.

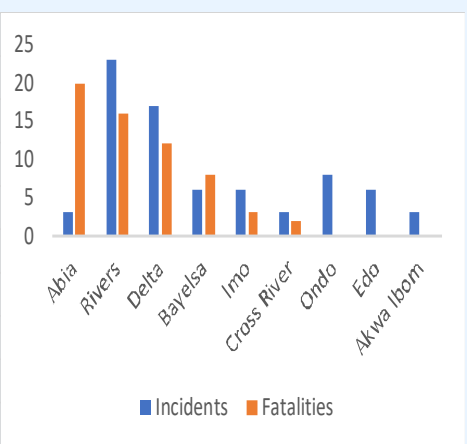
Fatalities Heat Map, Political Violence



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

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.

The Fund For Peace



The Fund for Peace (FFP) is an independent, nonpartisan, 501(c)

(3) non-profit research and educational organization founded over five decades ago, headquartered in Washington D.C. FFP works to prevent conflict and promote sustainable security by building relationships and trust across diverse sectors and by developing innovative technologies and tools.

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, management, and preven-

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Email: afeno@pindfoundation.org

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