

# Niger Delta Weekly: Emerging Trends in the Herder-Farmer Conflict in Delta

May 17-23, 2020

## Description

Emerging data shows important changes in the context and dynamics of the herder-farmer conflict in Delta state. Clashes between farmers and herders over access to land for farming and grazing have been recurrent in the state since 2017. Recent incidents indicate that the conflict is becoming increasingly intertwined with violent criminality including kidnapping and armed banditry, especially in Oshimili North, Ughelli North and Aniocha North LGAs. According to data (see map below), criminal violence relating to the herder-farmer conflict caused over 200 fatalities in Delta state between January 2017 and April 2020. In February 2020, for instance, over 10 farmers were reportedly killed by suspected herdsmen in three communities in Uwheru, Ughelli North LGA. Recently, communal tensions escalated following a series of criminal violence involving herdsmen in the state. On May 7, 2020, two members of a local vigilante group were reportedly killed by suspected armed herdsmen in Okpanam, Oshimili North LGA. The incident reportedly triggered a reprisal attack on a settlement belonging to some herders in the area.

## Why it Matters

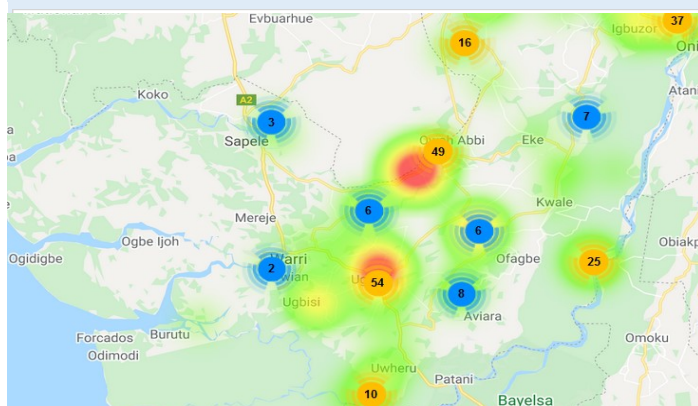
The current criminal manifestation of the herder-farmer conflict is both causal and symptomatic of rising grievances between herders and farming communities in the state. This could cause an increase in the frequency, intensity and geographical scope of the herder-farmer conflict, with far-reaching socio-economic and political repercussions.

**Social:** The present criminal dimension of the conflict could intensify tensions between herders and farmers, deepen ethno-religious divisions and increase communal hostilities which could trigger cyclical violence whereby any attack against herders or farming communities would result in punitive reprisals. This could also cause the creation of militias and proliferation of arms which can intensify banditry and cattle rustling. This could cause more killings and general insecurity.

**Economic:** The impact of the herder-farmer conflict could be economically devastating, especially when the conflict is intertwined with criminality. The conflict could disrupt farming, thereby causing a reduction in agricultural output and household income, loss of livelihoods, food insecurity and deepen rural poverty. It could also deplete the agricultural labor force, endanger crop production and pastoral farming, and jeopardize agro-allied businesses in the state.

**Political:** The criminal aspect of the herder-farmer conflict could present additional security challenges for the state. The situation could encourage residents to establish local vigilante groups and militias as self-help mechanisms. This could also result in arms proliferation, increase criminal violence and cause political instability in the state.

## Fatalities Heat Map of Criminal and Communal Violence Involving Herders and Farmers in Delta



Heat Map shows cluster of reported fatalities caused by violence involving herders and farmers in Delta state, January 2017 - April 2020. Sources: All data sources formatted on the P4P Peace Map [www.p4p-nigerdelta.org](http://www.p4p-nigerdelta.org).

## Prognosis

Organized crime is both a trigger and driver of the herder-farmer conflict in Delta state. Peace and development actors should work with security agencies and the state government to make sure that the proposed joint security outfit code-named 'Operation Delta Hawk' is structured to effectively deal with the various communal and criminal aspects of the herder-farmer conflict. Stakeholders should also collaborate with the government to establish a Farmer-Herder Conflict Early Warning System to support the security outfit.

## Contact Us

**Inquiries:** Afeno Super Odomovo, Research Coordinator

**Telephone:** 08172401595

**Email:** [afeno@pindfoundation.org](mailto:afeno@pindfoundation.org)

## 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.



FOUNDATION FOR PARTNERSHIP INITIATIVES IN THE NIGER DELTA



NIGER DELTA PARTNERSHIP INITIATIVE