

COMMUNIQUÉ

Issued at the End of the Roundtable on the Impact of Communal Conflicts on Agricultural Investments in the Niger Delta

Held on Wednesday, May 7, 2025 | 9:00 AM – 12:00 PM

The Foundation for Partnership Initiatives in the Niger Delta (PIND) convened a multi-stakeholder roundtable titled *"The Impact of Communal Conflicts on Agricultural Investments in the Niger Delta"* on May 7, 2025, in Port Harcourt, Rivers State.

The roundtable was convened in response to findings from PIND's policy brief and analysis of Peace Map data, which recorded more than 800 fatalities linked to communal conflicts in the Niger Delta between January 2014 and December 2024. The policy brief examined the intersection of communal conflict and economic development, focusing specifically on how communal violence impedes agricultural productivity and investment. Rooted in land ownership, access, and usage disputes—including the persistent herder-farmer crisis—these conflicts have resulted not only in loss of life and property, but also in widespread disruptions to livelihoods, food security, and investor confidence.

Participants included representatives from government agencies, the private sector (including agricultural investors), farmer and herder groups, civil society organizations, traditional institutions, peacebuilding actors, and development partners. Together, they examined the increasing threat of communal conflicts—particularly land-related disputes—to agricultural investment and productivity in the region.

The objectives of the roundtable were to:

- I. Provide a platform for peace and development stakeholders to explore the impact of communal conflict on agricultural investments and productivity;
- II. Highlight how peace impact investing can address the root socio-economic drivers of conflict and instability in the region;
- III. Outline a collaborative, multi-stakeholder approach to mitigating the situation and disseminate actionable outcomes through this communiqué.

Key Observations:

1. **Land as a Critical Resource:** Land in the Niger Delta holds deep economic, cultural, and political significance. Disputes over land ownership and access often become flashpoints for violence.
2. **Deterrent to Investment:** Communal conflicts create instability and uncertainty, discouraging agricultural investors and stalling economic development.
3. **Conflict Drivers:** Key drivers include weak land governance, population growth, climate change, youth unemployment, urban encroachment, insecurity, and inadequate dispute resolution mechanisms.

Head Office

NO 4, 2nd Avenue,
FHA Estate, Guzape,
Abuja, Nigeria

Economic Development Center

Queens Court, Kings Avenue,
Off Tombia Extension, GRA Phase 3,
Port Harcourt,
Rivers State, Nigeria

Economic Development and ATED Center

Ejuri/Omoba Etchie Street,
Egbokodo Itsekiri,
Delta State, Nigeria

4. **Peace Impact Investment Potential:** Conflict-sensitive investments that support both peace and economic opportunity can build resilience and stability.
5. **Security Gaps:** Weak institutional response and poor enforcement capabilities often push communities to take matters into their own hands, escalating violence.
6. **Policy Enforcement Deficits:** Policies like the ban on open grazing are poorly enforced, allowing tensions to persist and escalate.
7. **Role of Middlemen:** Some middlemen in agricultural value chains contribute to conflict through exploitative or divisive practices.
8. **Arms Proliferation:** There is growing use of armed escorts by farmers and herders, signaling increased insecurity in agricultural logistics.
9. **Data Gaps:** Inadequate and unreliable data hinder evidence-based planning and policy decisions for agriculture and conflict mitigation.
10. **Misinformation and Conflict Perception:** Sensationalized or inaccurate media reporting can misrepresent conflicts, inflame tensions, and deter investment.
11. **Community Interference:** Agricultural investments often face local opposition due to misaligned interests or encroachment, theft, and community disputes.

Resolutions and Recommendations:

1. **Adopt a Multi-Stakeholder Approach:** Government, private sector, civil society, traditional institutions, and community actors must collaborate to address the socio-economic root causes of conflict.
2. **Strengthen Community-Based Dispute Resolution Platforms:** Empower and integrate traditional and alternative dispute mechanisms at the grassroots level.
3. **Prioritize Peacebuilding for Livelihoods:** Focus peacebuilding efforts on resolving land-related disputes to enable a secure environment for agricultural investment.
4. **Support Peace Impact Investments:** Promote investments that are intentionally designed to mitigate conflict and foster inclusive economic development.
5. **Design Conflict-Sensitive Projects:** Agribusinesses should conduct Conflict Sensitivity Analyses and apply the "Do No Harm" principle, ensuring community engagement from project inception through implementation.
6. **Strengthen Early Warning and Response Systems:** Utilize platforms such as PIND's Peace Map for timely conflict tracking and informed, preventive action.
7. **Build Local Capacity:** Provide training and tools for community leaders, peace actors, and local stakeholders to resolve disputes constructively.
8. **Implement Strategic Land Use Planning:** Establish and enforce land use policies that designate land for agriculture, support food security, and prevent spatial conflicts.
9. **Use Environmental Remediation as Prevention:** Invest in soil restoration, reforestation, and flood management to reduce competition over shrinking land and water resources.
10. **Enact Arms Control Legislation:** The National Assembly should fast-track legislation to control the spread of small arms and light weapons in rural and conflict-prone areas.
11. **Engage Media as Peace Actors:** Promote conflict-sensitive journalism through capacity building for media professionals, encouraging responsible, accurate, and solutions-oriented reporting.

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12. **Establish a Regional Media Charter for Conflict Reporting:** This charter will guide journalists and media outlets in conflict-sensitive coverage, promoting facts, peace narratives, and mitigation efforts.
13. **Strengthen Security Agencies:** Agencies like the Agro Rangers (NSCDC) should be better equipped and trained to intervene effectively in agro-related conflicts.
14. **Ensure Policy Implementation:** Agro-related conflict mitigation policies must be consistently and transparently implemented with ongoing stakeholder engagement.
15. **Promote Private Ranching:** Support private-sector-led ranching through incentives to reduce pressure from open grazing, boost productivity, and minimize land-use conflicts.

Conclusion:

The roundtable reaffirmed that addressing communal conflict is crucial to achieving sustainable agricultural development in the Niger Delta. Participants committed to taking concrete steps to implement the recommendations outlined in this communiqué and called on all relevant actors to do the same, to create a secure, productive, and investment-ready environment in the region.

Signed,

Foundation for Partnership Initiatives in the Niger Delta (PIND)

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