

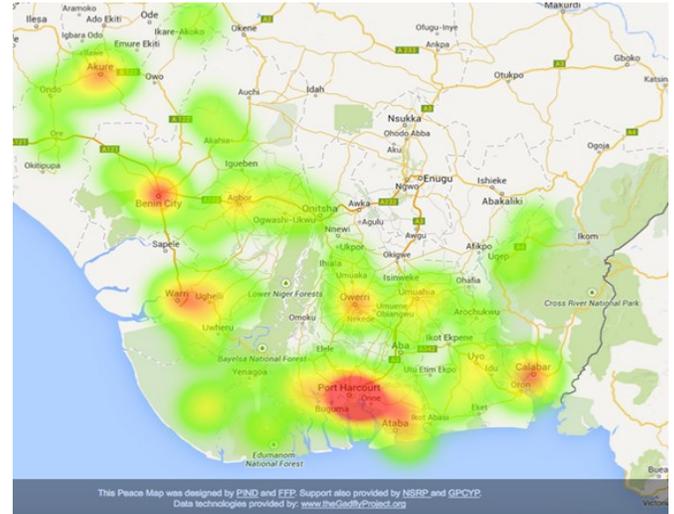
Niger Delta Election Violence Update

January - March 2015

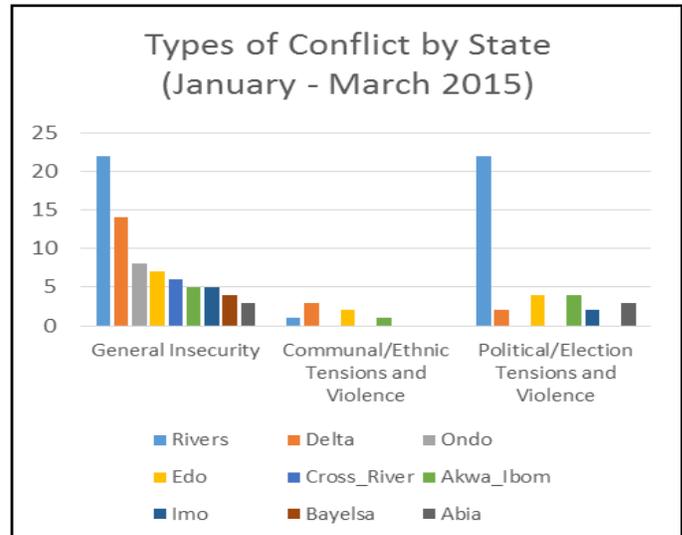
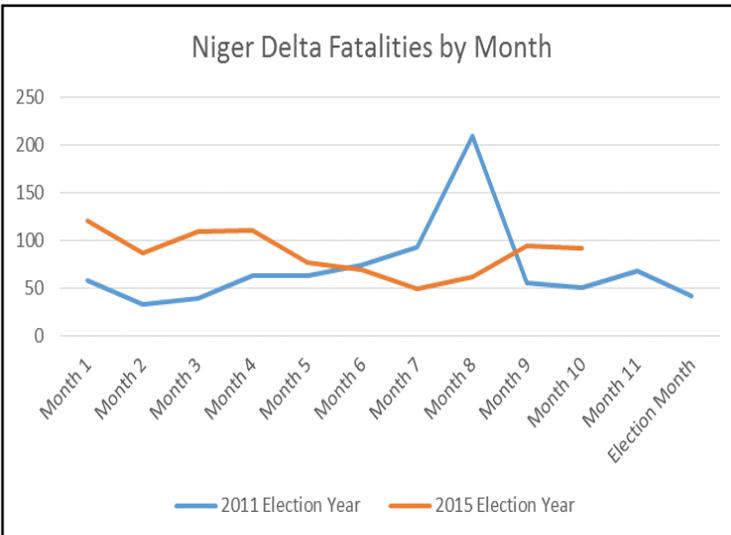
Summary

Following the party primaries in late 2014, political jockeying has continued between and among parties. The postponement of the elections originally slated for February 14, due to insecurity in the Northeast, appears to have raised the level of uncertainty. In some states, gangs and cult groups have taken sides. In others, political rallies have escalated to violence. Even issues not directly election-related such as communal tensions and criminality have been affected. Logistical challenges around the distribution of Permanent Voter Cards (PVCs) have further complicated matters. Unlike previous cycles, this election looks to be a real contest between the ruling party and the opposition, which has raised the stakes considerably, particularly in states like Rivers and Edo.

At the presidential level, the contest is between a candidate from the Niger Delta and one from the North. However it would be a mistake to assume that the Niger Delta region is monolithic in its support of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), particularly at the state level. While the severity of election violence may ultimately vary depending on who wins the federal election, in the Niger Delta it is perhaps more important for stakeholders to focus their conflict mitigation efforts around the state and local elections. These will occur two weeks later, with their results in many ways more directly salient for local constituents. This memo captures the latest trends in the nine states, including the dynamics particular to each.



P4P Heat map: Incidents in Niger Delta States, Jan to Mar 2015
Sources: P4P, NEEWS2015/TMG, NSRP Sources, Council on Foreign Relations, FFP's UNLOCK, Nigeria Watch, ACLED
www.p4p-nigerdelta.org



Line graph shows trends in monthly violent fatalities in the Niger Delta, comparing the 2011 election year with 2015. Overall, the 12 months prior to the 2015 election has been more lethal than in 2010-2011, even with the spike in deaths in Nov/Dec 2010 associated with insurgency/counter-insurgency.

Bar graph shows conflict incidents reported from Jan-Mar 2015. Rivers state had the most incidents of general insecurity and political tension, while Delta had the most communal/ethnic tensions reported. Delta has also been the most lethal state during this period.



Building Peace in the Niger Delta

A number of initiatives are under way to reduce the negative effects of conflict before and after the election through early warning and conflict assessment linked to practical interventions on the ground. When data on patterns and trends of conflict risk factors is connected with training and capacity building for response, and amplified by the use of peace journalism in the media, a real difference can be made for peace and security at the local, state, and national levels.

Local and international organizations and coalitions such as WANEP Nigeria, CLEEN Foundation, Search for Common Ground, the Transitional Monitoring Group, Stakeholder Democracy Network, Nigeria Watch, Council on Foreign Relations, ACLED, Partners for Peace, AA PeaceWorks, the Nigeria Civil Society Situation Room, and The Fund for Peace (FFP) have been collecting data for early warning and conflict assessment and advocacy.

The Foundation for Partnership Initiatives in the Niger Delta (PIND) has facilitated a local network of over 2,700 traditional rulers, government officials, civil society, women's leaders, and youth, who are collaborating on peace and conflict mitigation activities every week, including sensitization and direct mediation efforts. Other organizations, like NSRP are also working to support platforms that respond to conflict risk in several Niger Delta states. Initiatives such as Dawn in the Creeks and Shun Wahala seek to promote peace through media outreach on television and radio.

PIND actively seeks to leverage and amplify all of these initiatives, so as to multiply their overall effectiveness region-wide. In addition to joint projects and partnerships with many of the above initiatives, one tool supported by PIND is a public, online platform to enable information sharing and outreach. Data from this tool was used in the briefing below. To access the interactive platform, visit www.p4p-nigerdelta.org.

Delta

At least 34 people were reported killed between January 1 and March 7 in cult clashes, other criminal violence, and election violence.



Election-related conflict issues included multiple reports of rising tensions sparked by the destruction of campaign materials by the supporters of opposing parties in Sapele, Udu, and Uvwie LGAs. Clashes involving youths and political thugs were reported in Sapele, Uvwie, and Warri South. There have also been several reports of frustration and confusion surrounding the process of PVC distribution.

Communal violence included a clash between Ijaw and Urhobo communities in Bomadi and Ughelli South LGAs that reportedly killed one person, and violence between pastoralists and farmers in Ughelli North. In Warri South a land dispute between two communities escalated to violence. Several other cases of communal violence were also reported during this period, including one in Ethiope East which resulted in multiple injuries.

Criminal violence included several clashes between cult groups, especially in Warri South, as well as in Ughelli North and Ika south in which several were killed.

Delta has an estimated population of 4.1 million people (2006 census). The state produces about 35% of Nigeria's crude oil.

It has historically been the most violent state in the region (with cultist, militant, communal, and political violence), although recently Rivers has exceeded Delta in the number of incidents reported. Since the "Warri Crisis" of the late 1990s, there remains legacy of group grievance among the Ijaw and the Itsekiri, which has been a factor in the recent controversy over the Escravos Gas Export Processing Zone (EPZ) project.

Governor Emmanuel Uduaghan (PDP) won the 2011 election with 52% of the vote, narrowly defeating the DPP Candidate. This year, Ifeanyi Okowa won the PDP primaries and will be running for governor in the 2015 election.

Rivers

At least 11 people were reported killed between January 1 and March 7 in cult violence, sea piracy, other criminal violence, and election violence. For the first time since before 2009, Rivers has exceeded Delta State in the number of incidents of general insecurity, although the number of fatalities is still higher in Delta.



More than in any of the other states, cult groups appeared to be taking sides in the election, including allegations that the Icelanders and Greenlanders have been involved in "political thuggery." Clashes between cult groups have also been reported in Obio/Akpor and Degema although these clashes have not always been directly election-related. Other cases of election violence include the reported attack on the All Progressives Congress (APC) headquarters in Okrika, the shooting

of APC supporters in Khana, another shooting incident targeting a PDP campaign team in Abua/Odual, the destruction of an APC party office in Andoni, the disruption of an APC rally in Port Harcourt, another political rally that turned violent in Asari-Toru, as well as the hijacking of PVCs and the destruction of campaign materials.

In February, courts in Degema, Isiokpo, and Port Harcourt were targeted with explosives, although there were no fatalities reported for the incident.

The most populous state in the Niger Delta, Rivers has an estimated population of 5.2 million (2006 census). It has also been among the most violent states in the region since the militancy de-escalated with the introduction of the Amnesty program in 2009. With Governor Amaechi's high profile defection from the ruling party, it has become ground zero for the APC/PDP contest in 2015. Having delivered about 2 million votes to PDP in 2011, it is a major electoral prize for either party this time around. Chief Nyesom Wike (PDP) is running against Dr. Dakuku Peterside (APC) for the governorship of the state.

Abia

At least 5 people were reportedly killed between January 1 and March 7 in criminal violence as well as in one incident with ethno-national coloration in an alleged killing of several members of the Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB) by "sponsored thugs."



There were two peaceful protests held in Umuahia North LGA, one by pensioners complaining of not have received their payments over four months, and one by the local chapter of the Nigeria Labor Congress protesting alleged marginalization of certain delegates at the recent NLC national congress in Abuja.

Other incidents included the reported beheading of a local chief in Bende LGA that caused tensions in a small rural community.

There were no reported incidents of violence directly related to the election during this period aside from a minor incident in Isiala-Ngwa North LGA, in which a man was allegedly beaten after being caught tearing down PDP election posters.

Abia has an estimated population of 2.4 million (2006 census), predominantly of Igbo origin. Comparatively, it has not experienced the levels of violence and insecurity that other states in the Niger Delta have between 2012 and the end of 2014. Abia produces about 27% of Nigeria's crude oil and a significant amount of its natural gas. It is also rich in yam, maize, rice, potatoes, and cashews. Theodore Orji (PDP) was re-elected as governor of Abia state in 2011. Since the dissolution of the local government administrations in January 2010, there have been no Local Government Area (LGA) level elections although they are scheduled for April 2015.

Akwa Ibom

At least 5 people were reportedly killed between January 1 and March 7 in communal and political violence.



Levels of violence in the relatively peaceful state of Akwa Ibom have risen in 2015, primarily relating to pre-election tensions, including clashes between supporters of the APC and the PDP.

In Uyo LGA, reports suggested PDP supporters beat an APC supporter to death after the victim was caught tearing down their political posters. This was then met by a reprisal attack from APC supporters, which left five people injured. Other pre-

election incidents included thugs thought to be affiliated with PDP setting two APC cars on fire in Oron LGA, and at least three deaths at a PDP political rally in Etinan LGA.

The only non-election incident for the period related to an inter-communal clash sparked by a domestic dispute, resulting in one reported fatality.

Akwa Ibom has an estimated population of about 3.9 million (2006 census). It is one of the largest petroleum producers in Nigeria. Agricultural products include palm, rubber, cocoa, rice, cassava, yam, plantain, and banana. The state has generally been peaceful, although some incidents of political violence have been reported over the last two election cycles.

In 2011, Godswill Akpabio (PDP) won the gubernatorial election with 83.4% of the vote. In late 2014, Udom Emmanuel won the PDP primaries and will run against APC, AP, JP, and APGA candidates in the 2015 elections.

Cross River

At least 3 people were reportedly killed between January 1 and March 7 in incidents involving criminal violence and mob justice.



In an incident that may have been criminal in nature, armed men reportedly attacked the home of the Cross River Assembly Speaker Larry Odey, injuring one of his security guards.

In mid-January, several thousand private school teachers reportedly demonstrated in protest of state taxes.

Although there has been little election violence in Cross River during this period, intra-party tensions have risen surrounding the results of the PDP primaries in late 2014.

Cross River has an estimated population of 2.9 million (2006 census). It is one of the fastest growing states in Nigeria. A long-standing border dispute with neighboring Cameroon ended with the transfer of most of the Bakassi peninsula to Yaoundé in 2013. Although relatively peaceful in comparison with states in the core Niger Delta (Delta, Bayelsa, and Rivers), there have been multiple episodes of inter-communal violence and land competition over the past several years.

Governor Liyel Imoke (PDP) was elected in 2007. After an annulment, he won a re-run in 2008, and was elected again in 2012. Benedict Ayade won the PDP primaries in late 2014 to run in the 2015 general elections, although since then there has been controversy as to who will ultimately represent the party, raising tensions in the state.

Edo State

At least 14 people were reportedly killed between January 1 and March 7 in incidents involving land conflict and political violence between supporters of the APC and PDP parties.



Election-related tensions during this period included threatening political rhetoric, the murder of a PDP supporter in Owan East, and a case of alleged voter fraud which escalated to a standoff between supporters of the two major parties outside a police station in Esan West.

In January, there was a major protest that turned violent by students at the University of Benin against the recent demolition of parts of the university.

The most lethal incident during this period related to a suspected land dispute in February, where youths reportedly attacked a palm oil plantation in Ovia South-West, killing several workers and injuring five others. In a separate land dispute, a community leader was reportedly shot and beheaded in suburban Benin City in January.

Edo, one of Niger Delta's more violent states between 2012 and 2014 according to P4P Peace Map data, has an estimated population of 3.2 million people (2006 census). Edo's economy centers on agriculture, including food crops and rubber. Mineral resources include granite, limestone, marble, lignite, crude oil, gold, and kaolin clay.

Governor Adams Aliyu Oshiomhole assumed office in November 2008, after winning an appeal in the 2007 elections. In July 2012, Oshiomhole was reelected for a second term in a landslide victory. In a sign of escalating inter-party tension, lawmakers attempted and failed to have him impeached in 2014.

Imo State

At least 4 people were reportedly killed between January 1 and March 7 in political violence as well as one alleged clash killing several members of MASSOB.



On January 16, police reportedly dismantled a bomb near the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) office in Owerri LGA. Then, at the end of the month, a commissioner from the Imo State House of Assembly was shot and killed in what appeared to be an assassination, as police later reported nothing had been stolen from the victim.

There were two protests reported during this period, one of which was a labor protest over non-payment of salaries. The other was a demonstration by a group of widows against the state government. That incident turned violent when youths attacked the protestors, reportedly injuring five.

Also in January, three members of the secessionist movement, MASSOB, were allegedly killed at a funeral in Orlu LGA, though accounts of the incident differ.

Imo has a population of approximately 3.9 million people (2006 census). The population is predominantly Igbo (98%). Imo's economy mainly consists of exporting natural resources such as palm oil, mahogany, crude oil, and natural gas.

Owelle Rochas Okorocha has been the governor of Imo since May 2011. In 2011, he left the People's Democratic Party (PDP) to run for governor with the All Progressives Grand Alliance (APGA). After being elected, Governor Okorocha fired all 27 local government chairmen and replaced them with a transition committee. Okorocha later switched to the APC.

Given historical grievances associated with the Biafran War and APC's popularity in the North, this move has raised ethnic sentiment in the run-up to the 2015 elections.

Bayelsa

At least 7 people were reported killed between January 1 and March 7 in incidents that were not directly election-related (cult clashes and sea pirate attacks).



Conflict risk factors related to the election included multiple reports of frustration and confusion over the process of PVC distribution. There were also several reports of destruction of campaign materials by youths and thugs in Brass, Kolokuma/Opokuma, and Nembe Local Government Areas (LGAs), exacerbating tensions. Tensions between parties and candidates escalated to violence on several occasions, particularly in Sagbama,

Nembe, Ekeremor, and Southern Ijaw LGAs, often involving suspected paid thugs.

Other incidents that took place during this period included attacks by sea pirates, clashes between cult groups, and land conflict. There were several reports of tensions in Kolokuma/Opokuma and Ekeremor over pipeline surveillance jobs. Property was also reportedly destroyed in an intra-communal clash over the traditional stool.

Bayelsa is one of the smallest states in the country, with an estimated population of 1.7 million (2006 census), mostly of Ijaw descent. It produces between 30 and 40% of Nigeria's oil and gas. Commercial fishing and agriculture, including oil palm, raffia palm, rubber, and coconut also make up a significant portion of the state's economy.

Violence in Bayelsa, as measured by the raw number of incidents is in the mid-range when compared to the other Niger Delta states. But when calculated on a per capita basis, that ranking increases significantly.

Governor Henry Dickson (PDP) won the election in 2012 after a period of uncertainty in the wake of Governor Sylva's termination. The next gubernatorial elections are slated for 2016.

Ondo State

At least 25 people were reportedly killed between January 1 and March 7 in incidents involving criminal and ritual violence.



The most lethal incident during this period was a bank robbery in Akoko North East, in which over a dozen were reportedly killed.

Other incidents included the suspected ritual killing of two young girls and a number of other murders.

There were no reported incidents of violence directly related to the election during this period.

Ondo state has a population of approximately 3.44 million (2006 census). The majority are of Yoruba descent, with a sizable minority of those from Ijaw sub-groups, particularly along the coast. Ondo derives most of its revenue from the production of cocoa, palm oil, rubber, lumber, and cassava. The state is also rich in oil and minerals. Violence in Ondo was relatively low in comparison to the other Niger Delta states according to Peace Map data.

Governor Olusegun Mimiko was re-elected in October 2012 as a member of the Labour Party. In 2014 he defected to join the PDP. The next gubernatorial election in Ondo State is slated to be held in 2016.

This update draws on information from data integrated on the P4P Peace Map, as well as "Violence in Nigeria: Patterns and Trends" by Patricia Taft and Nate Haken, Springer International Publishing, 2015

FFP partners with NDPI in the design and implementation of PIND's peacebuilding program in the Niger Delta to promote peaceable livelihoods and economic development in the region.