

POLICY BRIEFING NOTE

INSECURITY IN EDO STATE: ISSUES, ACTORS AND SOLUTIONS

Executive Summary

Insecurity is a major problem that affects the everyday lives of people resident in Edo State. Crimes such as kidnapping for ransom, internet fraud, human trafficking, and armed robbery are commonplace in cities and communities across Edo State. Organised political violence such as inter-communal land boundary conflicts, land grabbing, herders' attacks, electoral violence and thuggery also shape the landscape of insecurity in Edo State. This poses a critical challenge for peaceful living and calls for urgent policy response by stakeholders and government in Edo State.

Issues and Dynamics of Insecurity in Edo State

There are various types of security threats and violent conflicts in Edo State. The key and routinized ones are inter-communal land boundary conflicts, land grabbing phenomenon, herders' attacks, political violence, kidnapping for ransom, internet fraud, human trafficking, chieftaincy tussle, and armed robbery.

Insecurities and violent conflicts are linked and mutually reinforcing. They are shaped and influenced by the socio-economic and political context of the State. Also, they produce untoward outcomes that have undermined peace and security across the state with overwhelming negative consequences for lives, livelihoods and investments.

Different actors are involved in activities that perpetuate insecurity in Edo State. These actors include cultists, kidnapers, armed robbers, cyber fraudsters, human traffickers, and herders. However, both formal and informal political actors such as politicians, religious leaders and traditional rulers who are supposed to reinforce security and mitigate violence have colluded with non-state violent actors to undermine peace.

Several efforts have been made by concerned individuals, groups, and government to intervene and resolve these raging security threats and violent conflicts. Some of the efforts include formation of vigilante groups, putting curses on criminals by traditional rulers and women, police and judicial intervention, invitation of military to mount surveillance around flashpoints, protests and peaceful marches or procession to draw attention of relevant authorities, setting up of taskforces, sensitization programmes and construction of anticrime rhetoric. Despite these efforts, violent insecurity has continued to surge, due to the state-centric nature of the responses which trump human security calculations.

There is a link between the nature and practice of politics in Edo State and insecurity in the state. Politicians across key political parties in the state recruit young men to engage in electoral malpractice, violence and threats of violence during the period of elections. These youth are often linked to existing criminal groups. Hence, criminal groups who are linked to political networks are less likely to be prosecuted by law enforcement agencies.

EMERGING TRENDS

Crime rate is on an upward trend.

In 2019, Edo State reported the highest incidence of armed robbery in Nigeria.

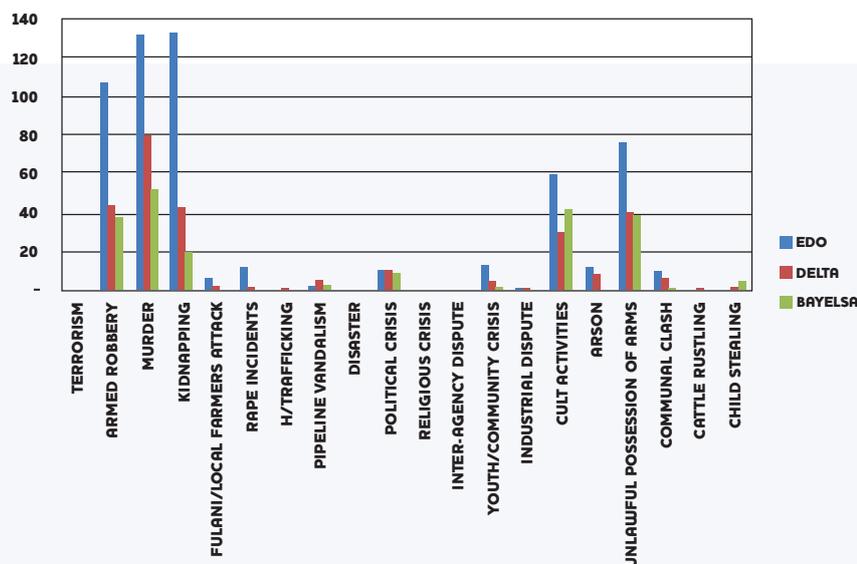
There is an increasing link between crime in Edo State and criminal groups in neighbouring states.

Irregular migration and human trafficking is fueling criminal violence in Edo State.

Large scale farming of marijuana/cannabis in rural communities is fueling the rise of criminal groups in the governance of rural communities where illicit drugs are cultivated.



Zonal Graphical Representation of National Crime Profile for Year 2019 ZONE 5 (BENIN)



POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

Edo State government should go beyond mere impressionistic programmes and psychological re-assurances – telling the people after attacks that the criminals will be arrested and prosecuted. This is very convenient but superficial. There is need for strategic thinking on bolder steps to deter the outbreak of insecurity. The following steps are important:

Vigilante Empowerment:

There is the need for government to empower the vigilante groups through training and remuneration. Functional operational equipment such as torchlights, communication gadgets, patrol vehicles, and motorcycles can be provided and maintained for them. Speedboats can be provided for members of vigilante groups or youth in Gelegele and other riverine areas. In addition, solar-powered street lights can be provided and maintained in vulnerable and hotspot areas.

Police-communities interaction:

The current disconnect between the communities and the law enforcement agencies should be addressed. A bottom-up and citizens-driven approach can be adopted for the people to claim ownership of security management.

Youth empowerment:

Government should revamp the ailing factories such as the Bendel Brewery, Edo Textile Mill and several others across the state in order to create job opportunities for teeming unemployed youth.

Infrastructure development:

The Edo State government needs to provide functional infrastructures, such as regular electric power supply that are supportive of the growth and development of small scale businesses and artisanship such as welding, hairdressing, and hair cut / barbing.

Value Re-Orientation:

The values, orientation, beliefs and attitudes of the people in a society set the tone of their engagements. Ostentatious lifestyle and get-rich-quick syndrome should be discouraged through de-construction and re-construction of the current value systems. The people should imbibe the value of questioning the sudden wealth of their neighbours rather than glorifying wealth without labour.

Further Reading

Iro Aghedo and **Oarhe Osumah** (2020) *Insecurity in Edo State: Issues, Actors and Solutions*. Research Report for Academic Associate PeaceWorks, Conveners of Niger Delta Dialogue, Warri, Delta State, Nigeria.

Credits

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