

POLICY BRIEFING NOTE

OVERCOMING THE CHALLENGE OF INSECURITY IN DELTA STATE

Executive Summary

Delta State has recorded increased incidences of violence that fuel insecurity which impacts on the everyday lives of people in the State. While violence has occurred previously in Delta State, the dimensions of insecurity and violence in the state have become more diverse, sophisticated and endemic. The Federal Government of Nigeria and Delta State Government have implemented different strategies to address the problem of insecurity. Yet, the challenge of violence and associated insecurity persists. This policy brief provides a summary of key findings and policy recommendations developed from field research conducted on violence, conflict and insecurity in Delta State.

Dynamics of Violence, Conflict and Insecurity in Delta State

Research shows that political competition at both local and state levels is a key cause of violence in Delta State. Extreme competition during political seasons, such as elections, often lead to violence. This was the case during the 2019 general elections. Other forms of political competition that lead to violence and insecurity in Delta State are leadership tussle at the local government level, communal clashes as a result of boundary disputes and disputed land ownership. Violence between ethnic groups also constitutes a major cause of insecurity. Growing incidences of clashes between migrant pastoralists and local communities are becoming endemic in various parts of the State.

Organised criminal activities are prevalent in Delta State. Kidnapping, illegal crude oil bunkering, cybercrime, land sale fraud, piracy, robbery and burglary, illegal sale and distribution of small arms and light weapons, and low-level illicit drug trafficking are identified across different local government areas in Delta State. However, illegal crude oil bunkering is more common in riverine communities in the State. Organised crime often leads to the outbreak of violence within communities or between criminal groups and security forces.

Beyond the physical manifestation of violence, social violence in the form of youth restiveness, illegal collection of tolls, and illegal taxes such as development fees (deve) are common in Delta State. These often lead to breach of public peace and contribute to insecurity when escalated.

Actors of Conflict, Violence and Insecurity in Delta State

Political Actors - Complicit security officers, negligent government officials/political leaders, Community Development Committees/Associations and groups armed and sponsored by political leaders.

Politicians are complicit in funding armed gangs, especially during elections. Security officials contribute to insecurity by violating the human rights of civilians in communities, especially in riverine areas such as Gbaramatu.

Criminal Actors – We identified street youth gangs and cult groups, armed herdsmen, new militant groups and internet fraudsters as the main criminal actors who contribute to insecurity in Delta State.

Corporate Actors – Multinational and National Oil Companies and their contractors are the key corporate actors whose actions contribute to the outbreak of violence and insecurity in Delta State. Communities claim that these actors provide support for factions within communities which carry out acts of violence. Beyond that, the disagreement between communities and corporate actors is often caused by breach of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) commitments by the latter.

EMERGING TRENDS

Conflicts between Fulani herdsmen and farmers in communities across Delta State are becoming common. This has led to outbreak of violence in some communities.

Internet crime syndicates are emerging in Delta State. These groups engage in ostentatious display of wealth. They often engage in acts of violence against state security or are accused of ritual killings in communities.

Communal land dispute is becoming more common across Delta State.



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RECOMMENDATIONS

To the government – Delta State Government and Federal Government Institutions

The Delta State Government should work with communities to standardise the laws governing elections into community governance bodies such as CDC and CDA.

The Delta State Government should work with communities to establish land boundaries and establish a government institution responsible for addressing land disputes between communities.

The Delta State Government should establish programmes that aim to provide nonviolent means for youth to engage in politics and governance.

The Niger Delta Development Commission should increase its support for small scale industrialisation activities that will contribute to job creation for youth in Delta State.

The Federal Government should mandate security agencies in the state to recognise the human rights of everyday citizens while intervening in violent conflicts and fighting crime in Delta State.

To Local Government Authorities and Community Committees

The LG authorities should investigate land dispute issues and liaise with state government to legally establish clear communal land boundaries.

The LG authorities should organise consistent town hall meetings to facilitate the involvement of community leaders and ordinary citizens in governance.

The LG authorities should develop specific programmes that are aimed to address drivers of insecurity in respective Local Governments and publicly condemn violence as a means to resolve ethnic differences.

To Security Agencies

The leadership of security institutions in Delta State should investigate and prosecute their officials who are involved in any form of criminal activity or aiding criminal activity in the State.

The Leadership of security institutions should develop and implement mechanisms to cooperate with communities in the provision of security services in the state. This should involve community level intelligence.

To Oil Producing Companies

OPCs should adopt environmentally friendly production policies and create partnerships with the locals in terms of conception of projects, awards of contracts and monitoring the execution of such contracts or projects.

OPCs should discourage the Nigerian government from using military or coercive measures in resolving disputes with communities. Instead, OPCs should facilitate dialogue and interactive practices as means of conflict resolution.

To Citizens – civil societies, youth groups, religious leaders and other registered interest groups

Communities and civil society organisations should develop and strengthen local level mechanisms for peace building and conflict prevention.

Communities and civil society organisations should develop nonviolent neighbourhood watch systems that will collaborate security agents.

Traditional leaders should develop strategies for revitalising norms and cultural practices that ensure the transfer of good values to young people in communities.

Community leaders, working with local government authorities, should develop nonviolent strategies for youth delinquency.

To International Actors in Nigeria

International Actors, especially diplomatic missions and development organisations, should maintain strong advocacy in support of human rights in Delta State and fund community initiatives to address insecurity and youth delinquency in Delta State.

Further Reading

Sam Ogege and **Ebimboere Seiyefa** (2020) *Insecurity in Delta 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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