

# POLICY BRIEFING NOTE

## INSECURITY IN CROSS RIVER STATE: ISSUES, ACTORS AND SOLUTIONS

### Executive Summary

In the last 2 decades, Cross River State has experienced growing incidences of violent conflicts that have negatively impacted security in the state. In 2017, four local government areas in Cross River State- Odukpani, Calabar Municipality, Calabar South and Yala were among eleven local government areas that recorded the highest conflict fatalities in the nine states of the Niger Delta. Violence in Cross Rivers State is very insidious in nature and caused by factors which appear on the surface to be mildly conflictual. For instance, the spillovers from the Ambazonia conflict in the Republic of Cameroon and its attendant refugee influx and arms proliferation, the Solombo and Lacasera babes street children phenomenon, scores of farming-related communal conflicts, cultism and criminality, kidnappings, piracy and militancy as well as the emergence of 'statelessness' occasioned by the ceding of Bakassi. Overall, there is weak state and institutional capacity to respond to the issues of conflict and insecurity at both the community and state level in Cross River.

### Issues and dynamics of conflicts and insecurity in Cross River State

Insecurity is enabled by cross-cutting issues such as the proliferation of small and light arms, widespread availability and use of narcotics, the rising incidence of poverty, cultism as a factor of political patronage, as well as compromised security and traditional institutions. The multiple layered and cross infiltration by cult gangs was identified as the primary enabler of insecurity in the state. Cultism intersects with other conflict elements to expose a weak state response capacity and the predisposition of security officials to condone violence and insecurity. Less visible but also an emerging challenge is the growing numbers of young jobless males from the Northern parts of the country roaming the streets of urban areas and other people linked to herdsmen/farmers clashes in the rural areas.

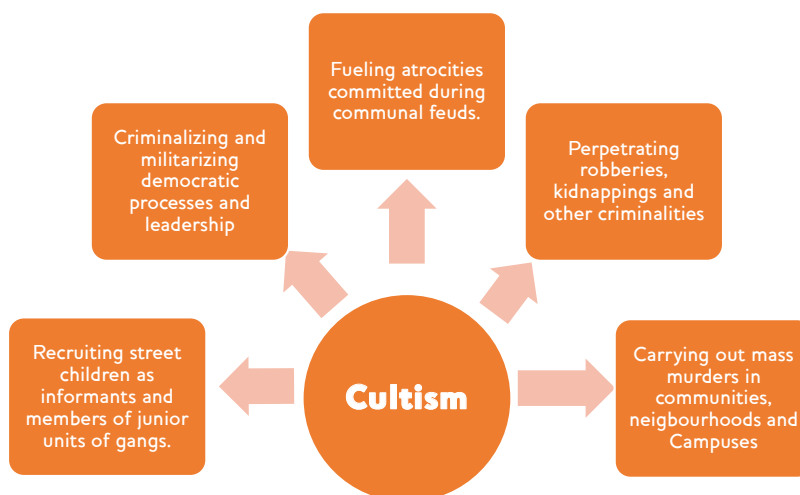
### EMERGING TRENDS

The widespread growth and involvement of street children in crime in urban areas such as Calabar.

The growing number of unemployed young men migrating from Northern Nigeria to the South.

Growing conflicts between farming communities of Cross River State and herdsmen/pastoralists that move to the state in search of pastures for their cattle.

### Cultism as a Major Propeller of insecurity in Cross River State



# POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

## Institutional Capacity of the Security Agencies

- It is important for all stakeholders to recognize the underperformance of security agencies due to lack of capacity to deal with the contemporary complexities of crime, violence and insecurity.
- There is an urgent need for institutional reforms and capacity building to enable security agencies perform their role at different levels of society.

## Communal and border conflicts

- The government working with relevant partners should ensure the creation of a Peacebuilding Commission, which will operate as a Conflict Early Warning and Early Response (CEWER) and Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) mechanism at all levels.
- The state government in partnership with the National Boundary Commission (NBC) and relevant partners should ensure urgent and appropriate mapping and delineation of contested boundaries where they exist, and also ensure that steps are taken to create clear boundaries between contesting groups in the state. The state and federal governments should ensure the enforcement of court decisions on boundary delineation, such as that between Cross River and Akwa Ibom States.

## Militancy and Piracy

- The state and federal government should immediately revisit the Greentree Agreement and other commitments to the protection, resettlement and rehabilitation of the people of Bakassi. In particular, it is important that the issue of Bakassi does not become subsumed in the Ambazonia self-determination issues arising from Anglophone Cameroon.
- The Nigerian federal government should be more decisive about charting a course for the ongoing Ambazonia crisis in Cameroon. This crisis has significant implications for Nigeria's security, especially in Cross River State. Nigeria should seek to protect its territorial integrity and the Nigerians living in border communities.
- The federal government must intensify efforts to reduce illicit Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALWs) in the Gulf of Guinea which now also fuel piracy and criminality in Cross River State.

- The Cross River State government must take steps to end incentives for violence in the political process of the state. Such steps must address the links between political patronage which benefits cultists and gang leaders with rewards in power.

## Drugs, Street Children, Cultism, Kidnaping and general Criminality

- The operations of the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency should be strengthened and supported to enforce the ban on illegal drugs and narcotics. The NDLEA and the social welfare ministry of the state government should be enabled to develop programmes for rehabilitating drug addicts.
- The Cross River State Ministry of Social Welfare should immediately commence a process of documenting street kids in the state, and ensuring that they are returned to homes and fully rehabilitated.

## Farmers-Herders Conflict and Refugees influx/IDPs

- The state clashes between host communities-refugees/IDPs and farmers-herders conflicts in the state require a more specific examination of the issues and their implications for the state.
- Being a border State, a process should be established for documenting and identifying migrants into Cross River State. This should be done in a manner that does not infringe on the right of refugees, Nigerians and host communities

## Gender based Violence and Trafficking in young persons

- Women are significantly affected by violence and insecurity in Cross River State. Cult groups and criminal gangs perpetuate rape, sexual exploitation and forced prostitution against women in Cross River State. There is an urgent need for the Cross River State government to ensure the implementation of the Violence Against Persons Prohibition Act (VAPPA) 2015.

## Further Reading

Ndifon Neji Obi and Ken Henshaw (2020) Insecurity in Cross River State: Issues, Actors and Solutions. Research Report for Niger Delta Dialogue, Warri, Delta State, Nigeria.

## Credits

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