Nigeria Conflict Bulletin: Abia State

Patterns and Trends, January 2012 - June 2015

Since 2012, Abia has been the most peaceful state in the Niger Delta overall, as measured by fatalities per capita. In the 2015 gubernatorial elections, Okezie Ikpeazu, of the People's Democratic Party (PDP) was elected to replace outgoing Governor Theordore Orji (also PDP) in the second round of voting, after the first round was declared inconclusive due to irregularities.

In 2010, there was a spike in kidnapping activities and associated fatalities, including a high profile kidnapping of over a dozen schoolchildren from a bus, which led to a security offensive by military and police.   Other factors in the security landscape include the role of vigilantes (Bakassi Boys) and the Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB).
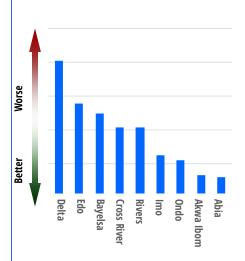
This Conflict Bulletin provides a brief snapshot of the trends and patterns of conflict risk factors at the State and LGA levels, drawing on the data available on the P4P Digital Platform for Multi-Stakeholder Engagement (www.p4p-nigerdelta.org). It represents a compilation of the data from the sources listed below, not necessarily the opinions of FFP or any other organization that collaborated on the production of this bulletin. The screenshot of the heat map on this page shows the relative distribution of incidents from one LGA to the next from January 2012 to June 2015. The trendline on the next page shows the number of incidents and fatalities over time. The bar chart shows the relative trend of incidents of insecurity by LGA per capita.
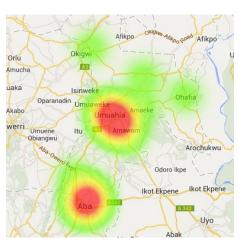
The summaries draw on data collected by ACLED, FFP's UNLocK, the Council on Foreign Relations' NST, WANEP Nigeria, CSS/ETH Zurich, NEEWS2015, and Nigeria Watch integrated on the P4P platform. They also draw on data and information from "Violence in Nigeria: Patterns and Trends," by Patricia Taft and Nate Haken (Springer Press, April 2015).

Reported Violence*

Fatalities per Capita (Jan 2012-June 2015)

* Using Nigeria Watch data (www.nigeriawatch.org) formatted to the P4P Web Map platform (www.p4p-nigerdelta.org)
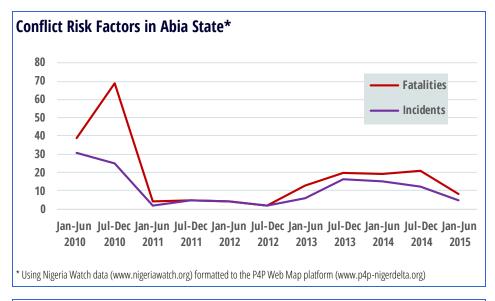

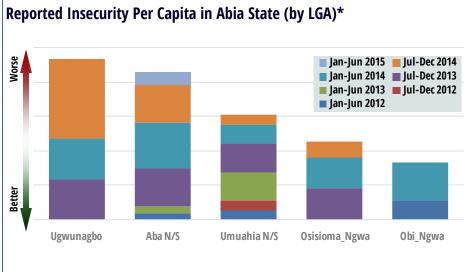The graphic above is a Heat Map (screenshot) of Conflict Risk in Abia State 2012-2015 — www.p4p-nigerdelta.org.

Overview of Abia State

Abia State has an estimated population of 2.4 million, predominantly of Igbo origin. Comparatively, it has not experienced the levels of violence and insecurity that other states in the Niger Delta have over the time period analyzed. It has been the most peaceful state in Niger Delta since 2012 as measured by the number of conflict fatalities per capita. 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.

Conflict Risk Factors in Abia State*

* Using Nigeria Watch data (www.nigeriawatch.org) formatted to the P4P Web Map platform (www.p4p-nigerdelta.org)

Reported Insecurity Per Capita in Abia State (by LGA)*

FFP is committed to promoting sustainable human security around the world, and is the International Coordinating Partner on Partners for Peace (P4P), an initiative supported by PIND. FFP has been working with local civil society in Nigeria to develop the UNLocK network since 2010.

One of the data sources utilized in the summary was derived from the UNLocK network in Nigeria, a partnership between The Fund for Peace and the Institute of Human Rights and Humanitarian Law (IHRHL).

The data used in this analysis was pulled from the integrated digital platform for multistakeholder engagement developed by P4P, an initiative supported by Partnership Initiatives for the Niger Delta (PIND). For a deeper understanding of the conflict risk factors, visit www.p4p-nigerdelta.org.

Disclaimer *The content of this report represents a summary of the incidents reported in the data, not the opinions of the organizations that collaborated on the compilation of this information.*

Aba North/South LGA

(Abia South Senatorial District)

Key LGA Risk Factors
> Criminality
> Protests
> Kidnapping
> Cultism
> Vigilantism
> Mob Justice

Issues in Aba North/South LGAs mainly related to criminal activity and allegations of corruption. In April 2015, a mob set a suspected robber on fire. In May, a woman and a Catholic priest were kidnapped by separate groups; one of the priest's kidnappers was shot dead by police. In June, artisans protested high electricity bills and poor electricity supply and water hawkers protested the hike in prices of the products sold.

In the second half of 2014, robberies and kidnapping remained the predominant incidents reported. In August, three people were killed during a robbery attack on a community. Also during the month, a man was pushed from a moving vehicle and killed by oncoming vehicles as a result of two men trying to rob him. In September, armed robbers reportedly killed two members of a vigilante group and in a separate incident in September, two people were killed in the cross-fire from a kidnapping attempt. In October, kidnappers killed two people. In November, it was reported that a journalist was abducted. He was released later in the month. In December, a nurse was stabbed to death by another woman during a fight.

In July 2012, there was a protest by women's groups about layoffs in various sectors by the state government. In September and October, there were allegations in local newspapers about the connections between criminal gangs and political parties. Also during this time period, there were protests and complaints about taxes and levies, although none reportedly turned violent. In the first half of 2014, shootings and

abductions continued to be a concern. In January, a man who had been abducted was freed after four days. In February, two women and a baby were reportedly kidnapped in separate incidents. In May, a student from Abia State Polytechnic was reportedly shot to death by unknown gunmen suspected of being cultists. In June, a member of Abia State Vigilante Services (AVS), popularly known as the Bakassi Boys, was allegedly shot and killed by armed robbers.

Obi Ngwa
(Abia South Senatorial District)

Key LGA Risk Factors
> Kidnapping
> Human Trafficking

In 2014, in both February and October, it was reported that clashes between police and members of a kidnapping ring led to the death of at least 3 suspected kidnappers, one assumed to be the mastermind of the operation.

In early January 2013, it was reported that up to 50 women who had been victims of a human trafficking ring were found and freed.

In April 2012, it was reported that an anti-terrorism squad was accused of harassing civilians although no further details were subsequently provided.

Osisioma-Ngwa
(Abia South Senatorial District)

Key LGA Risk Factors
> Kidnapping
> Human Trafficking
> Political Tensions

Some political violence was reported in early 2015. In March, an improvised explosive was discovered outside of a government building, and in April, political thugs stole election materials. The military and the police reportedly clashed over an alleged breach of protocol in June.

In 2014, the main reported incidents related to kidnapping, domestic violence, and oil theft. Insecurity in Osisioma-Ngwa increased in 2013, with several instances of kidnappings, at least two cases suspected to be related to a ring of criminals involved in trafficking infants to so-called 'baby factories.' There were also reports of domestic violence during the year.

Ugwunagbo

(Abia South Senatorial District)

Key LGA Risk Factors
> Restive Youth
> Criminality
> Political Tensions

With a small population (under 100,000), Ugwunabo LGA has a high number of per capita incidents as compared to other LGAs in Abia State, but a low number of incidents overall. Issues related mainly to restive youth and criminality. During the first round of the gubernatorial elections in 2015, Ugwunagbo was one of the four LGAs where results were cancelled due to irregularities, leading to some inter-party tension at the time.

Umuahia North/South

(Abia Central Senatorial District)

Key LGA Risk Factors
> Political Violence
> Kidnapping
> Cultism
> Restive Youth

In February 2015, pensioners peacefully protested the non-payment of arrears in February. In March, members of the Nigeria Labor Congress protested what they believed was political marginalization of local political candidates. Women of the All Progressives Grand Alliance held a peaceful protest against alleged voter fraud by the PDP in April. In June 2015, the husband of a weightlifting champion was shot by unknown assailants.

In the first half of 2014, the overall level of violence appeared to be decreasing from 2013. Incidents of abductions and killings, however, continued. In February 2014, an aide to one of the sons of the State Governor was killed by an unknown gunman. In June 2014, a 72-year-old businessman was abducted by gunmen who demanded a N1.7 million ransom. The victim was reportedly found dead a day after the payment was made to the kidnappers. In July, the Abia State Commissioner for Agriculture was reportedly shot. He died the following week. In October, Umuahia North/South LGAs experienced a rise in incidents relating to the upcoming elections. A political protest was reported on October 17. Later that same month, thugs reportedly stormed an APC venue and assaulted observers and delegates, causing many to flee.

In January 2013, a lawmaker was reportedly kidnapped for ransom while in March of the same year gunmen allegedly attacked the home of former governor Orji Uzor Kalu. Also, in February, it was reported that a student died during a cult initiation ceremony at Abia State University.

Political thuggery, kidnapping, and cases of cult violence were reported in Umuahia North/South LGAs in the time period examined. In early 2012, the People's Progressive Alliance headquarters was reportedly attacked and property destroyed by gangs believed to be connected to opposing political parties. Violence during the 2012 annual New Yam Festival broke out, causing destruction of property. Since then, the P4P Network in Abia intervened to prevent this festival from escalating again.