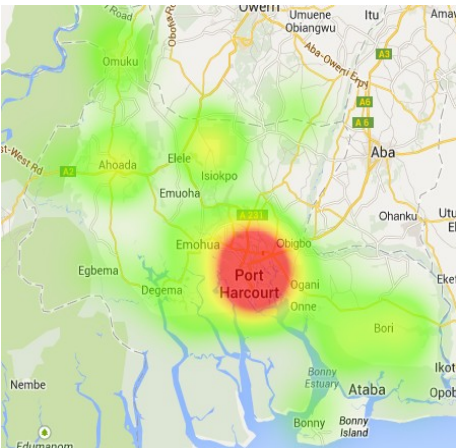


# Conflict Bulletin: Rivers State

## Patterns and Trends, 2012-2014



**A**mong the largest of the oil-producing Nigerian states, Rivers had been at the heart of the Niger Delta militancy until 2009. Now the state remains beset with a different array of political, communal, and criminal issues, including cult and gang-related violence, protests, and kidnappings. Rivers was a pivotal state in the 2015 general elections and experienced elevated levels of election-related tension and violence throughout 2014.

Since May 2013, political tensions were high in Rivers State after the disputed Nigerian Governor's Forum election. Formerly a member of the PDP, Governor Rotimi Amaechi, who is from Ikwerre (Rivers East Senatorial District), switched affiliation to the APC in November 2013. Despite the zoning formula, which would have given the PDP gubernatorial candidacy to an aspirant

from Rivers South-East, Nyesom Wike (Rivers East) won the PDP primaries, upsetting the rotation and raising ethnic sentiments across the state, including the Ogoni axis. In a surprise move, the powerful former militant group, Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND) apparently made a statement endorsing the APC candidate in the presidential election after claiming dissatisfaction with the current president and the PDP. In the run-up to the 2015 elections, cult groups and ex-militants lined up behind the two major parties and exerted influence through intimidation and violence. Ultimately, Wike (PDP) won the election to succeed Amaechi (APC) as governor.

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](http://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 above shows the relative distribution of incidents from one LGA to the next from 2012-2014. The trend-line on the following page shows the number of incidents and fatalities. The bar chart shows the trend of incidents of insecurity by LGA per capita.

The summaries draw on 2012-2014 data collected by FFP's UNLock, the Council on Foreign Relations' NST, WANEP Nigeria, CSS/ETH Zurich, Nigeria Watch, and ACLED 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).

## LGA Level Summary

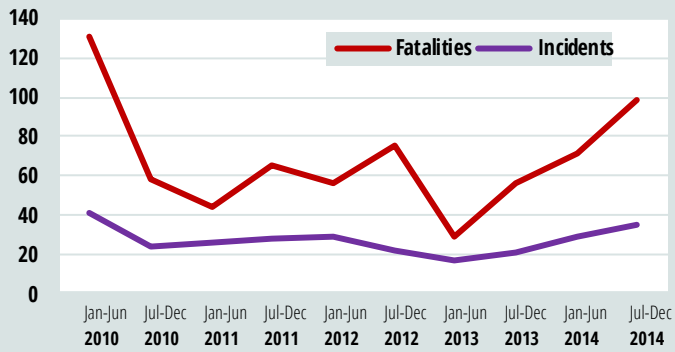
### Port Harcourt

(Rivers East Senatorial District)

Port Harcourt, the capital of Rivers State, has the highest population of all the state's LGAs. Given the high density of the urban population, conflict risk issues include robberies, kidnappings, and gang/cult-related violence. As the political capital of the state, protests and demonstrations are common. In the first half of 2012, large protests broke out over the government's removal of a fuel subsidy program. Later in the year, there were smaller protests reported over the delivery of public services. In the first half of 2013, there was increased political tension between supporters and detractors of Governor Amaechi, including a protest where police fired tear gas on a reported crowd of 1,000 trying to storm the State House Assembly building. Separately, later in the year two soldiers and two civilians were reported killed by fleeing

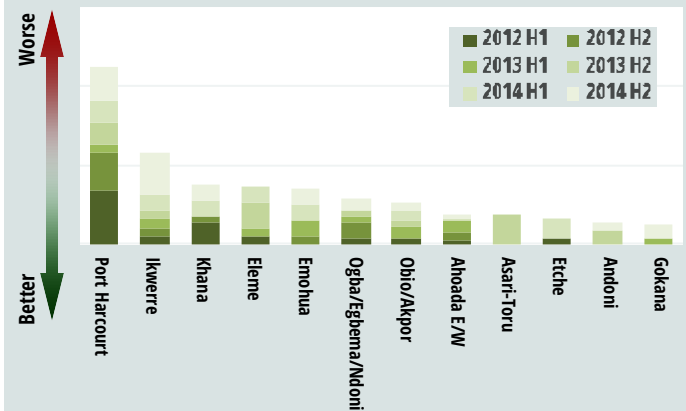
The graphic above is a Heat Map (screenshot) of Conflict Risk in Rivers State 2012-2014 — [www.p4p-nigerdelta.org](http://www.p4p-nigerdelta.org).

### Conflict Risk Factors in Rivers State\*



\* Using Nigeria Watch data ([www.nigeriawatch.org](http://www.nigeriawatch.org)) formatted to the P4P Web Map platform ([www.p4p-nigerdelta.org](http://www.p4p-nigerdelta.org))

### Reported Insecurity Per Capita in Rivers State\*



gunmen associated with the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND) while cult violence flared in December, resulting in the deaths of at least two police officers and several civilians during a bus robbery. Political tensions continued into 2014 with protests for and against the candidacy of Justice Daisy Okocha as Rivers State's administrative Chief Judge. In May 2014, a man was reportedly kidnapped and killed by his four abductors after collecting a ransom from his family. In August, business and commercial activities were halted following clashes between APC and PDP supporters ahead of the planned visit of Governor Amaechi to Obio/Akpor LGA. In late November, it was reported that nearly a thousand Ogoni youth protested the APC's decision to nominate a candidate for governor who was not their preferred choice, while earlier in the month, arsonists set fire to the PDP headquarters, although no one was formally charged in the aftermath.

#### Ikwerre

(Rivers East Senatorial District)

As in other LGAs, predominant issues included gang violence, criminality, police corruption, and land competition. In 2013, there were reports of tension between pastoralists and farmers and at least one clash between the two cult gangs, Dewell and Degbam. In early 2014, police reportedly arrested 320 people suspected

to be affiliated with Boko Haram. In September, nine people were reported killed in a turf battle among members of the Islanders, Dewell and Degbam cult groups. At the end of November, nine people, including PDP and APC supporters, were shot dead by gunmen suspected to be cultists. Reported among the victims was a chieftain of APC.

#### Khana

(Rivers South-East Senatorial District)

In Khana LGA, there continued to be communal tensions, particularly around the issue of land. There were also cult clashes and criminality including robbery and kidnapping. Land competition reportedly turned violent in 2012 when two communities in Ogoniland disagreed over whether and how a parcel of land should be developed by the state government as a banana plantation. In 2013, police arrests connected with cult violence predominated in the beginning of the year while a land seizure related to the development of a plantation sparked tensions in late May. In January 2014, political tensions spiked when suspected militants opened fire on a pro-Amaechi rally. Communal tensions between rival cult groups also left four dead during a clash that reportedly lasted a week in May 2014. In August, it was reported that at least three people were killed when two rival cult groups clashed. In October, a student protest turned deadly when a clash

between student protesters of a security guards at their university. The clash began after the demonstrations against an alleged assault of a fellow student at the hands of security personnel.

#### Eleme

(Rivers South-East Senatorial District)

In March 2012, a soldier apparently shot and killed a boy after he reportedly threw a bottle in the direction of the soldier's car, resulting in a protest by community youth over the death. In 2013, cult violence was blamed for violence and deaths, most notably in May when two people were reported killed in a clash between two rival groups. Several robberies during the year also resulted in deaths, with a reported three people being killed after an attempted break-in on a residential building. In 2012 and 2014, multiple kidnappings were reported, including that of a priest and a businessman. In November, a communal clash between Okrika and Onne youths over land reportedly led to two deaths.

#### Emohua

(Rivers East Senatorial District)

In Emohua, there were numerous cases of abductions and gang violence. A local monarch was reportedly kidnapped for ransom in April 2013 resulting in the deaths of at least two bystanders who were shot by

the kidnapers. The clash between Dewell and Degbam cult groups in bordering Ikwerre also reportedly impacted Emohua. Tension between political groups escalated in December, 2013, with a clash between PDP and APC supporters. In March and April 2014, cult violence, including clashes between the Islanders and the Icelanders reportedly killed several people. In November, in a suspected reprisal attack on a local community, two people were reportedly killed by a cult group.

### **Ogba/Egbema/Ndoni**

(Rivers West Senatorial District)

In Ogba/Egbema/Ndoni the primary issues reported during this period include flooding, criminality, kidnappings, and gang violence. In October 2012, severe floods caused the displacement of entire communities leading to inflation, starvation and serious difficulties with resettlement. In May 2013, unknown gunman reportedly tortured and killed an aid to the former PDP chairman Chief Godspower Ake. In July and October 2014, cult-related violence and attacks reportedly killed at least 30 people.

### **Obio/Akpor**

(Rivers East Senatorial District)

In Obio/Akpor, reports included criminality, cult violence, domestic violence and child abuse. Additionally, a political protest occurred when the local government chairman, who is considered to be an opponent of Governor Amaechi, was suspended by the Rivers State House of Assembly for the mismanagement of public funds. In response to ensuing violence from protestors demanding his reinstatement, police occupied the Obio/Akpor secretariat.

Four students from UNIPORT University were lynched by a mob on October 5, 2012. The reasons for the lynching are still unclear, but the victims were accused of having stolen electronics. After a YouTube video of the lynching was released, violent protests broke out. Thirteen people were arrested over the killings. Separately, in

December, at least five people were killed when members of a cult group purportedly went on a house-to-house rampage, shooting civilians while looking for unspecified individuals.

At a pro-Amaechi rally in January 2014, suspected police officers shot a senator of Rivers South-East constituency with rubber bullets during a speech. Police denied their involvement in the incident. Protests erupted from the senator's supporters immediately following the incident. Temporarily disrupting traffic, community youths staged a protest in February 2014, over claims that an oil company had seized a portion of their farmland. Other 2014 incidents included the shooting deaths of three school children, four policemen, a regional bank manager, and a driver by unknown gunmen and armed robbers.

### **Ahoada East/West**

(Rivers West Senatorial District)

In Ahoada East and West, the main pressures on human security stemmed from corruption, criminality, and cult violence. During the first half of 2012, there was an attempted jailbreak that reportedly led to multiple casualties. Other clashes between police and criminals occurred in both 2012 and 2013 and led to several deaths. Additionally, as Nigeria experienced the most damaging rainy season in decades, flooding in the second half of 2012 exacerbated pressure on the state's resources. At least 12 people were reported to have lost their lives, and property and crops were destroyed in the flood. According to media reports, incidents of water-borne diseases and food scarcity also increased during this time. In July 2014, it was reported that three people were shot dead by a gunman, although the cause of the attack was not indicated.

### **Asari-Toru**

(Rivers West Senatorial District)

Although relatively calm in 2012, reports of kidnappings and abductions spiked in Asari-

Toru in 2013, beginning in August with the kidnapping of four expatriates. Reportedly on their way to work on a government-owned fish farm, four Thai nationals and two Nigerians were forced into a car and driven away at gunpoint. While the two Nigerians were released immediately, a stand-off between local police and the kidnapers ensued for a week, with the expats eventually released. In September 2013, a clash reportedly broke out at a funeral between two rival groups, known as White Chelsea and Kegema Unity Forum, that left three dead although the reason for the fight was unclear. White Chelsea, identified by local news sources as a cult group, is suspected to have political connections in the LGA. In November 2014, at least two were reported killed in a cult-related clash over supremacy rights.

### **Etche**

(Rivers East Senatorial District)

Incidents of insecurity in Etche increased substantially from 2012 to 2014, from one reported incident the first year to eight this past year. In mid-2012, it was reported that nine policemen were arrested for the death of a community pastor while he was in custody. In 2013, a long-standing conflict over the allocation of oil profits from disputed land erupted between two families. In February 2014, it was reported that an APC chairman was assassinated although no further details were given. In May, cultist violence reportedly killed at least ten in a local community in the crossfire of a rivaling cult war. In August, a militia attack in four LGAs, including Etche, reportedly killed several, including a soldier and Air Force officer. In October, a fight between two armed youth gangs reportedly led to the deaths of at least three.

### **Andoni**

(Rivers South-East Senatorial District)

Although there were no reported incidents of violence in 2012, in June 2013 eight people were reportedly killed in a cult supremacy clash between the Icelanders

and the Greenlanders during a funeral. In October of that year, it was reported that three soldiers involved in a covert JTF operation were killed in a battle with sea pirates. In July 2014, it was reported that at least four people had been killed in a raid on a community by an armed gang.

**Gokana**  
(Rivers South-East Senatorial District)

Two incidents in Gokana that were reported during 2012 included a case of suspected child abuse by a village chief and the shooting death of a former militant by an assassin posing as a member of the JTF. In 2013, the main reports of insecurity came from gang and cult violence, often over

disputed territory and reprisal killings. In June, the bombing of a pipeline reportedly led to large fires and the loss of up to 6000 barrels of oil. In April 2014, a violent land dispute erupted between two communities, causing property damage although no deaths were reported. In September, at least one youth was reported killed after being ambushed in the continuation of an apparent dispute between two rival youth groups.

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

**IHRHL** 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).

**PIND** The data used in this analysis was pulled from the integrated digital platform for multistakeholder engagement developed for Partners for Peace (P4P) by PIND. For a deeper understanding of the conflict risk factors, visit [www.p4p-nigerdelta.org](http://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.