

# Nigeria Conflict Bulletin: Rivers State

Patterns and Trends, January 2012 - June 2015

Of all the states in the country, Rivers had the most violent gubernatorial elections in April 2015. 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,

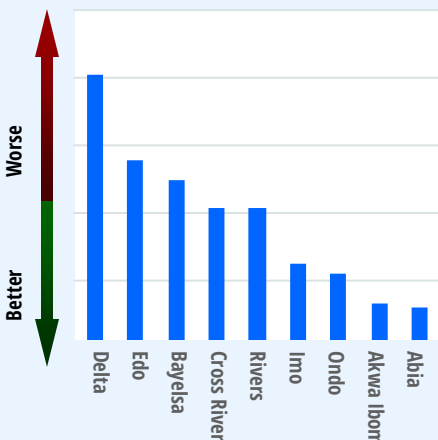
Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND) apparently made a statement endorsing the APC candidate in the presidential election after claiming dissatisfaction with the then-president and the PDP. In the run-up to the 2015 elections, cult groups and ex-militants lined up behind the two major parties and exerted influence through intimidation and violence. Ultimately, Wike (PDP) won the election to succeed Amaechi (APC) as governor. The PDP boycotted the local elections which were held immediately before the handoff of the governorship to the new PDP governor. One of Wike's first actions was to challenge the validity of the local elections in court and the court has since given a

decision to annul the said election.

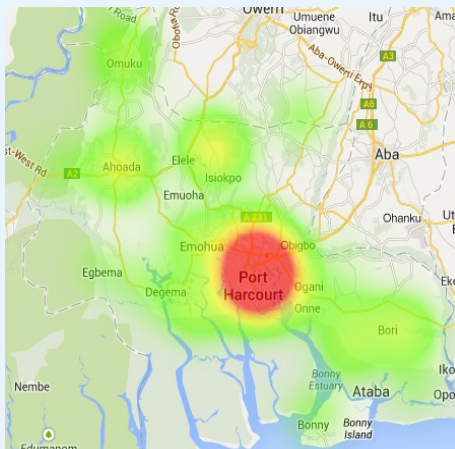
This Conflict Bulletin provides a brief snapshot of the trends and patterns of conflict risk factors at the State and LGA levels, drawing on the data available on the P4P Digital Platform for Multi-Stakeholder Engagement. It represents a compilation of the data from the sources listed below, not necessarily the opinions of FFP or any other organization that collaborated on the production of this bulletin. The heat map shows the relative distribution of incidents from one LGA to the next from 2012-2015. The trend-line on chart shows the number of incidents and fatalities. The bar chart shows the trend of incidents of insecurity by

## Reported Violence\*

Fatalities per Capita (Jan 2012-June 2015)



\* 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))



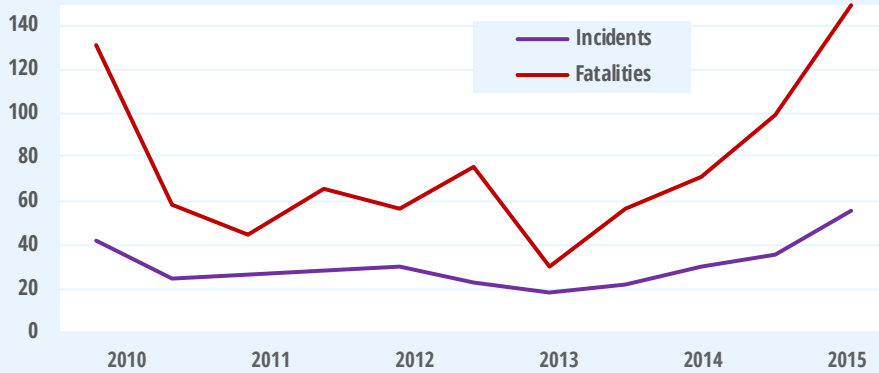
The graphic above is a Heat Map (screenshot) of Conflict Risk in Rivers State 2012-2015 — [www.p4p-nigerdelta.org](http://www.p4p-nigerdelta.org).

## Overview of Rivers State

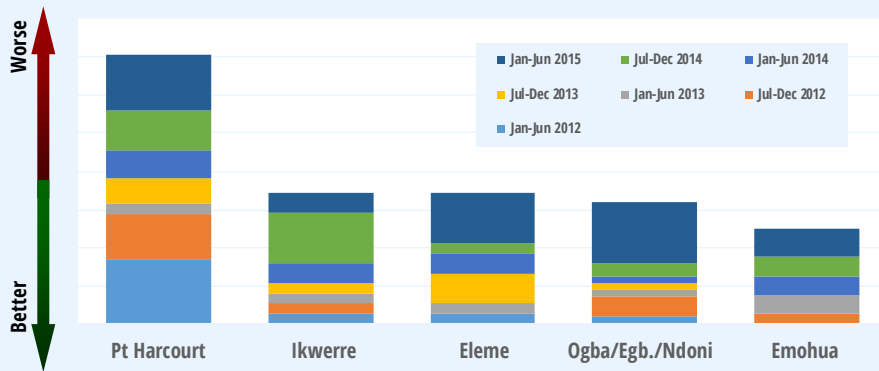


Among the largest of the oil-producing Nigerian states, Rivers had been at the heart of the Niger Delta militancy until 2009. Now the state remains beset with a different array of political, communal, and criminal issues, including cult and gang-related violence, protests, and kidnappings. Rivers was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

### Conflict Risk Factors in Rivers State\*



### Reported Insecurity Per Capita in Rivers State (by LGA)\*



LGA per capita. The summaries draw on 2012-2015 data collected by FFP's UNLock, the Council on Foreign Relations' NST, WANEP Nigeria, CSS/ETH Zurich, Nigeria Watch, NEEWS2015, 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).

### Ahoada East/West

(Rivers West Senatorial District)

#### Key LGA Risk Factors

- > Political Violence
- > Protests
- > Kidnapping

In the first half of 2015, nonviolent protests were carried out by groups over the reported non-payment of allowances as well as the non-payment of expected compensation claims by private companies to communities in the Niger Delta that were impacted by a 1998 oil spill. Political violence in April of 2015 resulted in the death of three APC members, and the abduction of the chairman of Ahoada East LGA—also a member of the APC.

In July 2014, it was reported that three people were shot dead by a gunmen, although the cause of the attack was not indicated. 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.



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](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.

## Andoni

(Rivers South-East Senatorial District)

### Key LGA Risk Factors

- > Cult Clashes
- > Piracy
- > Political Violence

In January of 2015, a local APC party office was destroyed by dynamite, but luckily no one was believed to be harmed by the explosion. Additionally, there were reports of domestic abuse in the first half of 2015.

In July 2014, it was reported that at least four people had been killed in a raid on a community by an armed gang. 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.

## Asari-Toru

(Rivers West Senatorial District)

### Key LGA Risk Factors

- > Kidnapping
- > Cult Clashes
- > Political Violence
- > Piracy

In 2015, the majority of reported violence was surrounding elections and political affiliations, including the destruction of campaign materials, violent political rallies, the employment of cultists as informal security for candidates, and heavy shootings preceding the elections. Other reported conflict in 2015 included sea pirates attacking women, oil bunkering, and cultists complaining that they had not been paid their Amnesty stipend.

In November 2014, at least two were reported killed in a cult-related clash over supremacy rights. 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.

There were several reports of abductions 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 kidnappers ensued for a week, with the expats eventually released.

## Eleme

(Rivers South-East Senatorial District)

### Key LGA Risk Factors

- > Cult Violence
- > Kidnapping
- > Inter-Communal Violence
- > Political Violence
- > Sexual Violence
- > Protests

In the first half of 2015, most of the violence was in connection to the April elections. In the lead-up to and just after the elections, at least five APC members were killed by gunmen suspected to be of PDP affiliation. In one notable case, a soldier affiliated with the PDP killed an APC member. On election day, youths hijacked election materials in Alesa, including ballot boxes. There were also two attacks on women and girls; a five-year-old girl was raped by her 20-year-old male neighbor, and a female presenter on Rhythm FM died after being shot by unidentified gunmen.

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.

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 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.

## Emohua

(Rivers East Senatorial District)

### Key LGA Risk Factors

- > Kidnapping
- > Cult Violence
- > Political Violence

On election day in 2015, it was alleged that election materials were stolen. In a separate incident on the same day, two members of the APC were confirmed to have been killed during the elections. In May, a security guard was murdered and mutilated by suspected ritualists while on duty for the local government secretariat.

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.

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 LGA also reportedly impacted Emohua. Tension between political groups escalated in December, 2013, with a clash between PDP and APC supporters.

## Etche

(Rivers East Senatorial District)

### Key LGA Risk Factors

- > Intra-Communal Violence
- > Cult Clashes
- > Political Violence

In April of 2015, three people were killed due to political violence during the gubernatorial and State House of Assembly elections.

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.

In 2013, a long-standing conflict over the allocation of oil profits from disputed land erupted between two families.

In mid-2012, it was reported that nine policemen were arrested for the death of a community pastor while he was in custody.

## Gokana

(Rivers South-East Senatorial District)

### Key LGA Risk Factors

- > Cult Clashes
- > Attacks on Energy Infrastructure
- > Inter-Communal/Land Conflict
- > Political Violence

In 2015, political violence increased, with reports of destruction of election materials by opposing parties, as well as intra-party conflict over the timing and location of political rallies and the stockpiling of weapons by political thugs. In May of 2015, six people were allegedly killed in a disagreement between members of the Deeken and Deeyor communities.

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.

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 6,000 barrels of oil.

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.

## Ikwere

(Rivers East Senatorial District)

### Key LGA Risk Factors

- > Cult Violence
- > Political Violence
- > Inter-Communal/Land Conflict

In February 2015, the High Courts of Isiokpo and Degema were bombed by a group who has yet to claim responsibility. In the lead-up to the April elections, there were a few reports of political violence, including the deaths of at least three people in home invasions and while voting. The Rivers State governor was also threatened by youths in April.

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.

In 2013, there were reports of tension between pastoralists and farmers and at least one clash between the two cult gangs, Dewell and Degbam.

## Khana

(Rivers South-East Senatorial District)

### Key LGA Risk Factors

- > Inter-Communal/Land Conflict
- > Cult Violence
- > Youth protests
- > Political Violence

In the first half of 2015, APC members were attacked by armed youths believed to be PDP thugs. One person died in this attack. In a separate incident, gunmen shot and killed an Ogoni student unionist in Bori.

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, polytechnic students clashed with security personnel and destroyed and looted property after an alleged assault on one of their peers.

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.

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.

## Obio/Akpor

(Rivers East Senatorial District)

### Key LGA Risk Factors

- > Mob Justice
- > Cult Violence
- > Political Violence
- > Vigilantism
- > Protests

In the first half of 2015, violence in Obio/Akpor included reports of election and political violence, sexual violence, domestic abuse, and inter-communal conflict. A vigilante group shot a suspected criminal in February, and in April, a reported and photographer were beaten by angry youth. Also in April, two young men were killed in a violent clash over a land dispute. Through the first half of the year, there were reports of abductions and domestic abuse. In March of 2015, the leader of the APC was reportedly shot dead by political thugs while supporting the party's candidate for governorship, and in April, there were multiple instances of the destruction and snatching of sensitive electoral materials. There were multiple reports of sexual violence in the first half of 2015.

At a pro-Amaechi rally in January 2014, suspected police officers shot a senator of Rivers South-East constituency with rubber bullets during a political rally. 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.

In 2013 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

## Ogba/Egbema/Ndoni

(Rivers West Senatorial District)

violence from protestors demanding his reinstatement, police occupied the Obio/Akpor secretariat. Other 2013 incidents in Obio/Akpor include reports of criminality, cult violence, domestic violence and child abuse.

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.

### Key LGA Risk Factors

- > Kidnapping
- > Cult Violence
- > Political Violence

In 2015, the majority of the violence reported in the LGA related to conflict between the PDP and APC political parties. After the killing of seven APC chieftains in March, the Rivers State Governor accused the police of taking sides with the PDP. Also in March, two men were shot dead as a group of youth snatched ballot boxes. In May of 2015, 26 cultists were reportedly shot dead by police after being found in their forest hideout—this cult group was supposedly responsible for several recent killings in Rivers State. In March, a prominent chief in Egbada community was killed by unknown gunmen.

In July and October 2014, cult-related violence and attacks purportedly killed at least 30 people.

In May 2013, unknown gunman reportedly tortured and killed an aide to the former PDP chairman Chief Godspower Ake.

In October 2012, severe floods caused the displacement of entire communities leading to inflation, starvation and serious difficulties with resettlement.

## Port Harcourt

(Rivers East Senatorial District)

### Key LGA Risk Factors

- > Political Violence
- > Sexual Violence
- > Cult Violence
- > Protests

In the first half of 2015, there were dozens of reports of sexual assault in Port Harcourt, a few of which resulted in the deaths of young girls. There were reports of attacks by gunmen; in March alone, there were reports of gunmen attacking and killing at least 14 people and injuring many more. In this period, protests were staged by different groups for various purposes. In February, doctors protested the murder of their colleague who was kidnapped for ransom and pensioners protested the non-payment of their monthly allowances. In March, student candidates wishing to write their exams protested delays, members of the Nigerian Union of Journalists protested political violence and attacks on journalists, and youths protested the alleged diversion of jobs by the government. Later, there were protests by students for cleaner drinking water, by civil servants over the non-payment of their salaries, and by youths protesting the potential dissolution of the elected council executive.

Most notably, there were multiple reports of violence surrounding the April elections. Political tensions rose in January with two PDP members killed by political opponents and unknown gunmen storming and bombing the site of a planned APC rally. Cultists and political thugs were hired by parties for security purposes and to intimidate opponents. In March, an APC-PDP protest turned violent, and in a separate incident three were confirmed dead in a clash between those same parties. On election day, political thugs reportedly beheaded a man and protesters delayed the distribution of materials, causing the ballots to open hours later than expected. In early May, APC supporters stormed the party's state headquarters in protest of allegedly

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fraudulent council primaries. PDP boycotted the local elections. Then when Wike assumed office, he contested the validity of the election of the LGA Chairmen in court and won a judgment in his favor.

Political tensions continued into 2014 with protests for and against the candidacy of Justice Daisy Okocha as Rivers State's administrative Chief Judge. Citing insecurity, judicial workers went on strike, leading to a backlog in cases. 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.

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 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.

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.