

Niger Delta Quarterly Conflict Trends

January to March 2016

Introduction

Violence has been increasing in the Niger Delta over the last several years. According to data formatted and integrated onto the Peace Map, in Quarter 1 of 2016, the number of fatalities reached the highest point since the end of the militancy, in late 2009.

The conflict landscape in the Niger Delta is layered and complex, involving communal tensions, political competition, organised criminality, and resource-based conflicts; exemplified by militancy, piracy, cultism, election violence, armed robbery, kidnapping, and land disputes that differ from state to state and LGA to LGA.

Data sources include Nigeria Watch (www.nigeriawatch.org), ACLED (www.acleddata.com), NSRP Sources (focused on violence against women and girls), as well as the IPDU SMS early warning system, and others.

To ensure that these trackers are comprehensive, please contribute your knowledge by reporting any verified incident of conflict to the IPDU Early Warning System by texting a message to **080 9936 2222**. Kindly include the relevant state, LGA, town, date, and brief description of the incident.

To read the latest monthly tracker, please visit: www.p4p-nigerdelta.org

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Context and Risk Profile

This quarterly tracker looks at the trends and patterns of conflict risk factors and incidents of violence, and their pressures on peace and stability in the Niger Delta. It is not a conflict analysis, however. Understanding the deeper conflict drivers, implications, and mitigating options requires a robust participatory, qualitative analysis of these trends by local stakeholders in affected communities, including women, traditional authorities, political leaders, youth, private sector actors, and others.

We hope that these trackers provide such stakeholders with information to inform that process of analysis and joint

planning to promote sustainable peace in the Niger Delta.

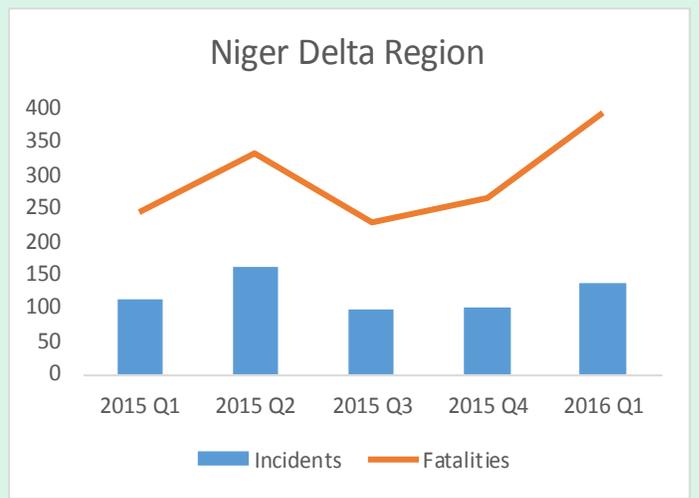
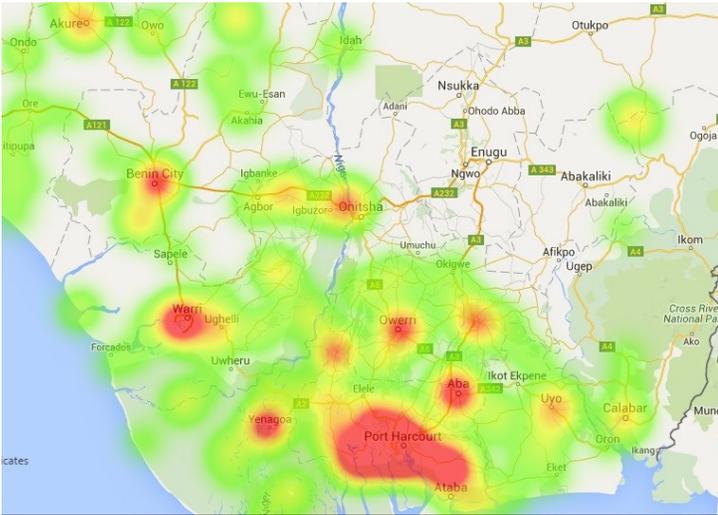
The Niger Delta comprises 185 out of the 774 local government areas, and covers 9 out of the 36 states of Nigeria namely; Abia, Akwa Ibom, Bayelsa, Cross River, Delta, Edo, Imo, Ondo and Rivers. With over 30 million people according to a 2006 population census, and an estimated population density of 265 people per square kilometre, the region accounts for more than 23 percent of Nigeria's population. The region is highly heterogeneous with over 40 ethnic groups who speak more than 250 languages. Fishing and farming are

historically the main occupations in the region.

The region contains vast reserves of oil and gas, which play important role in the Nigerian economy and global energy security.

In spite of these abundant natural resources, the Niger Delta is marked by poverty, economic underdevelopment, inequality, and environmental degradation. Historical grievances and a proliferation of armed groups (militant, criminal, and ethno-sectarian) contribute to many of the conflict dynamics described in the following pages.

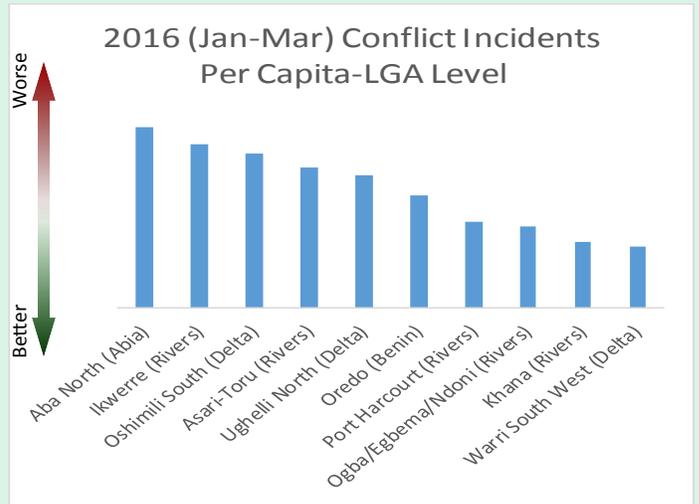
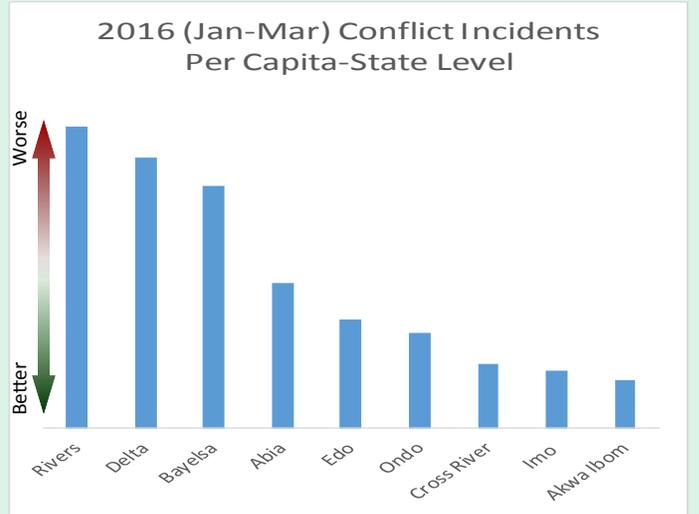
Regional Patterns and Trends in Conflict Risk—January to March 2016



Violence in the Niger Delta reached its highest level in 2016 Q1 since late 2009. During this quarter, the security situation in the region deteriorated considerably with increasing incidents of lethal conflicts, including political violence, protests, resource-based conflicts, criminality, and gang violence. Notable violence occurred during the supplementary governorship and re-run parliamentary elections in Bayelsa and Rivers state respectively. There was a significant rise in cult-related violence and criminality across the 9 states.

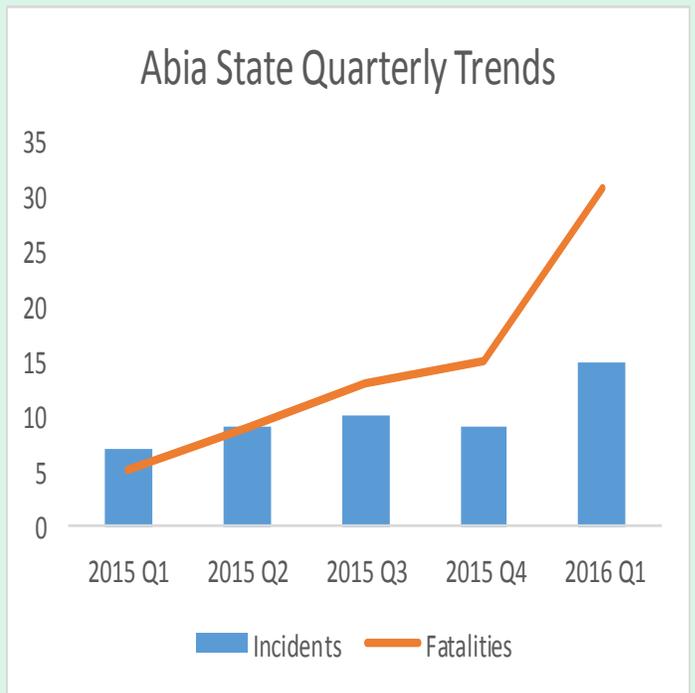
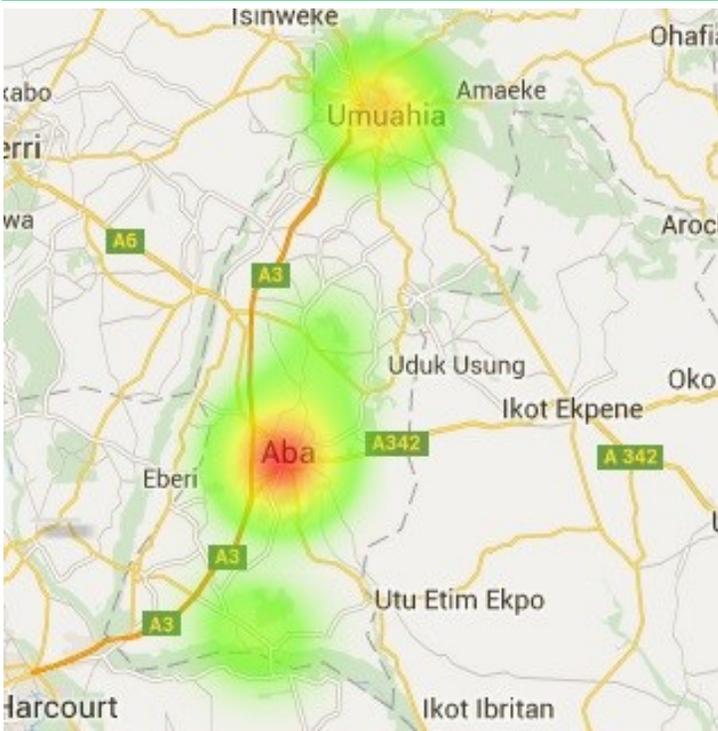
Rivers was the most violent state in the region during the quarter, with a rise in political and cult-related violence. In the run-up to the inconclusive March 19, 2016 re-run parliamentary elections in the state, many were reported killed in a series of politically motivated incidents and cult clashes. The second most violent state during the quarter was Delta, with multiple reported incidents of inter-communal tensions, land disputes, cult violence, and criminality. In Bayelsa state, the political violence that characterized the December 5, 2015 gubernatorial elections continued into 2016 Q1, and was followed by ongoing issues of piracy, kidnaping and militancy.

On a per capita basis, Aba North in Abia state was the most violent local government area (LGA) in the region during the quarter. Several fatalities were reported in a series of clashes between pro-Biafran protesters and security forces in Aba. There was also intense proliferation of conflict risks and escalation of violence in Ikwerre and Oshimili South LGAs in Rivers and Delta respectively.



Data for map and bar charts from ACLED and Nigeria Watch formatted and integrated on P4P Peace Map www.p4p-nigerdelta.org

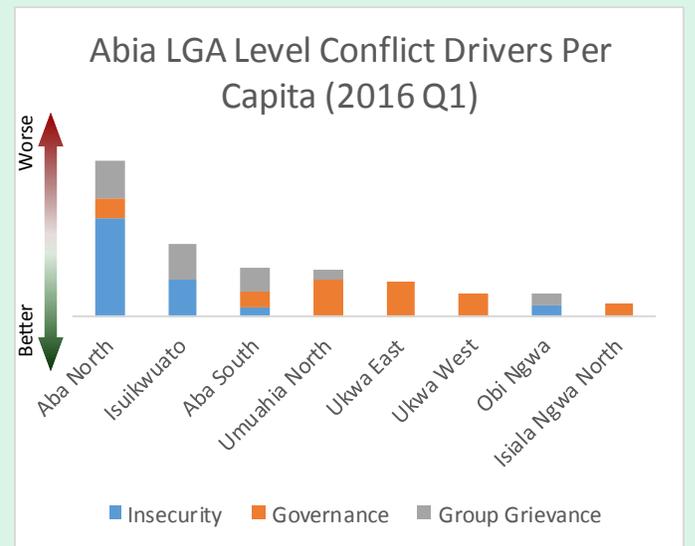
Patterns and Trends in Conflict Risk: Abia State



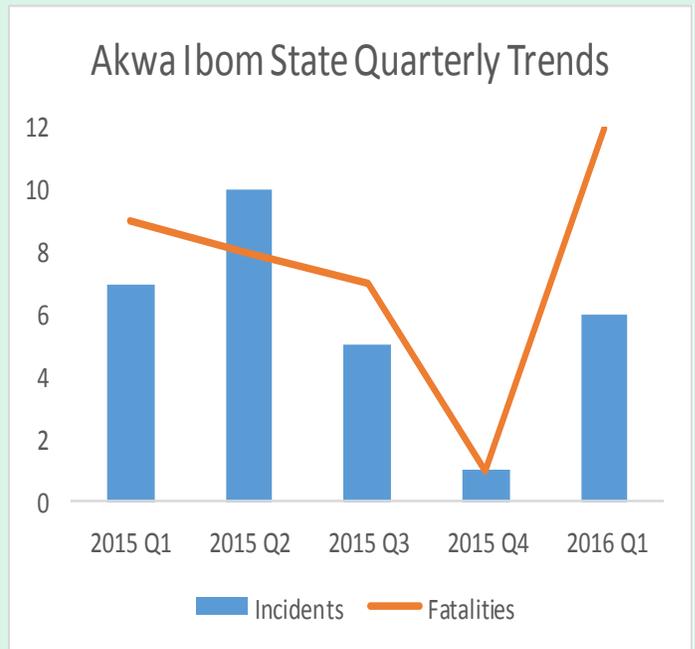
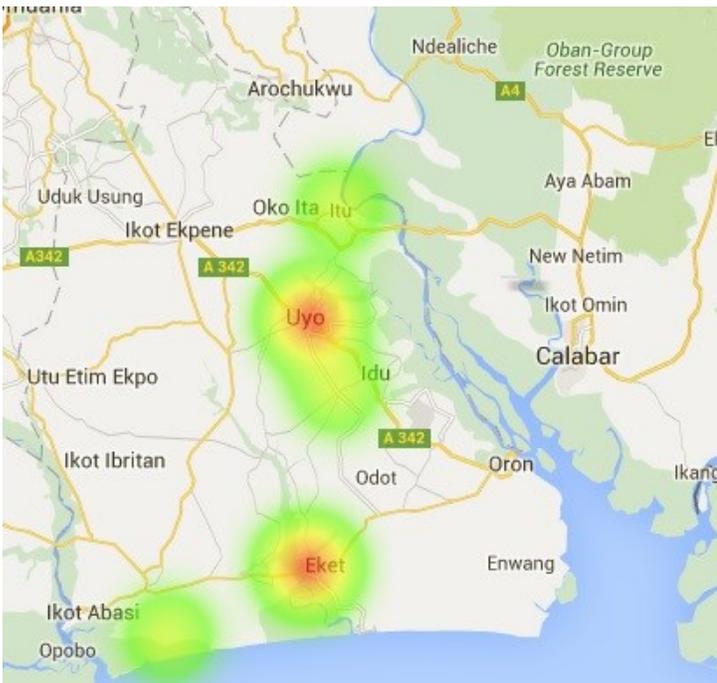
The first quarter of 2016 had the highest level of conflict risk in Abia state since a spike in kidnapping in 2010. On a per capita basis, insecurity was most prevalent in Aba North. Factors included protests by the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) and the Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB) over the detention of a popular pro-Biafra radio commentator, Nnamdi Kalu. Pro-Biafra protests escalated in January 2016 with clashes between security forces and protesters. In one incident at least six fatalities were reported when police allegedly opened fire on protesters in Aba.

Separately, a combined team of soldiers, Navy and police reportedly shot at IPOB members who gathered for prayers, killing over a dozen people and injuring others in Ukwa West LGA of the state. In addition, there were protests over disputed governorship elections in January 2016. Protests by political supporters over the nullification of the election of the incumbent governor by the court of appeal also caused political tension.

Gang violence and criminality were also elevated in the state during the quarter, including shootings, kidnappings and cult clashes.

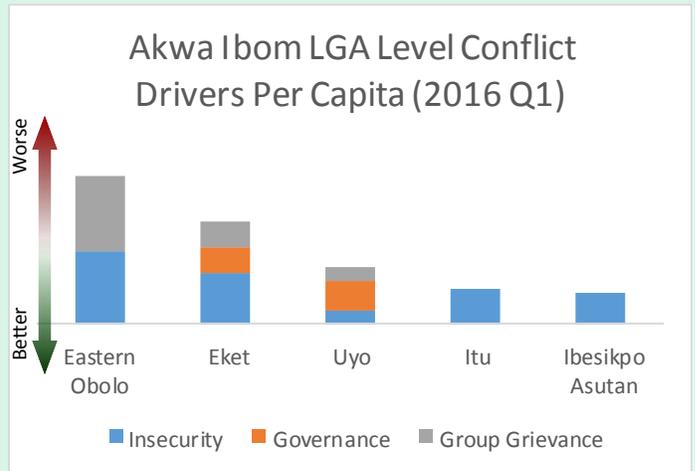


Patterns and Trends in Conflict Risk: Akwa Ibom



Akwa Ibom was the least violent state in the Niger Delta during the quarter, as measured by reported incidents of conflict risk per capita. In 2015, violence increased in January and April, with incidents mostly relating to elections in which about a dozen fatalities were attributed to election violence and clashes between supporters of the main political parties in the state. According to Nigeria Watch data, however, the 2015 election was less violent than the 2011 election cycle in the state.

Recent incidents included inter-communal conflict and criminality. On a per capita basis, Eastern Obolo and Eket LGAs had the highest levels of violence. However there was a higher raw number of incidents reported in Uyo, the state capital, during this period, relating to protests and violent criminality.



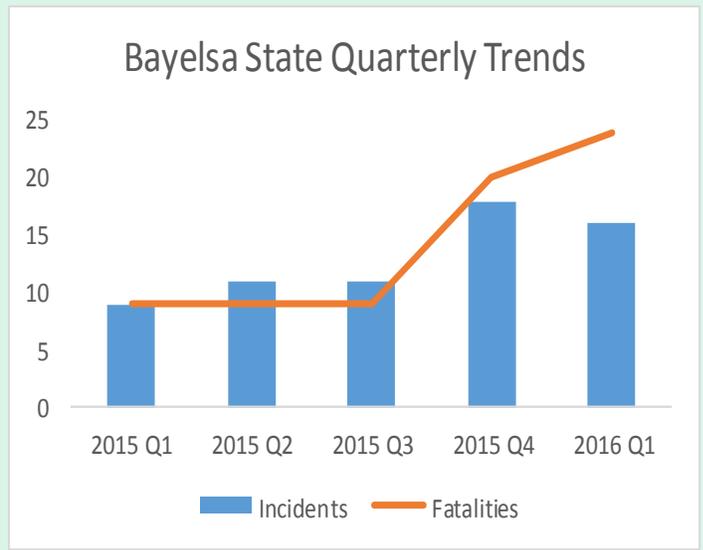
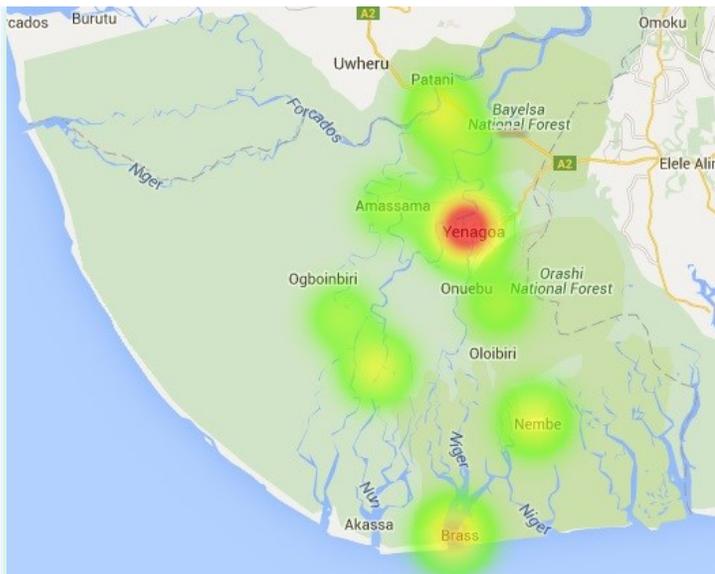
Communal Violence

In January 2016, there was a reported conflict over a contested boundary between communities in Ikot Abasi and Eastern Obolo. In February, a land dispute between two families was reported in Eyulor community in Orue-Offong/Oruko LGA. In March, there was a reported conflict involving residents of several mangrove island communities in Mbo LGA, along the Nigerian border with Cameroon, relating to territorial disputes.

Violent Criminality

Incidents of criminality including kidnapping, cult violence, robbery and mob violence were reported during the quarter. In January, police reportedly shot two kidnapers who had earlier abducted and killed a 74-year old woman in Uyo. Separately, two policemen were reportedly shot dead by armed youths who invaded a police station in February. In March, four people were reportedly killed during a cult clash involving suspected members of the Junior Vikings and the Axe Men Confraternity in a drinking spot in Eket.

Patterns and Trends in Conflict Risk: Bayelsa



Election Violence

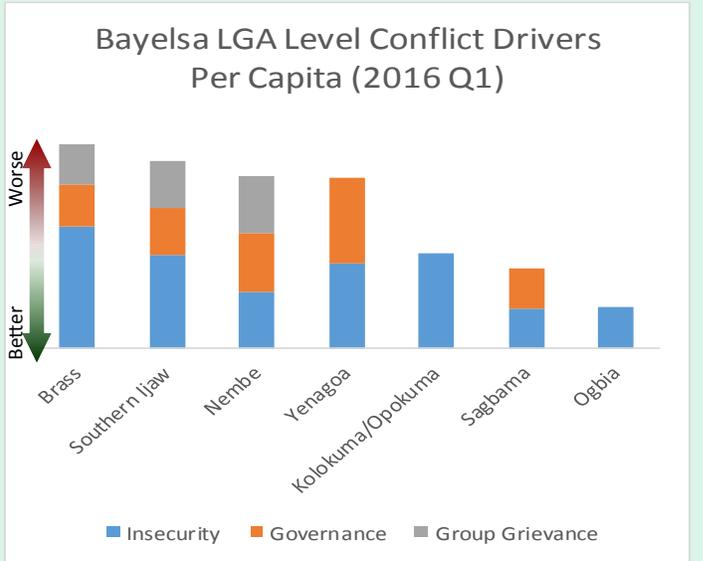
In Quarter 1, Bayelsa had the highest levels of lethal violence since late 2014. Rising levels of violence began with the build-up to the December 5th governorship elections which was characterized by tensions and violent clashes between supporters of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) and the All Progressive Congress (APC). Due to violence, the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) suspended elections in some LGAs. Election violence continued through the January 9 supplementary elections, with killings, shootings, and hijacking of voting materials, especially in Southern Ijaw and Ekeremor LGAs. Over a dozen people including four police officers and two soldiers were reported killed during the elections.

Violent Criminality

Violent criminality was also elevated during this quarter, including piracy, kidnapping and militancy.

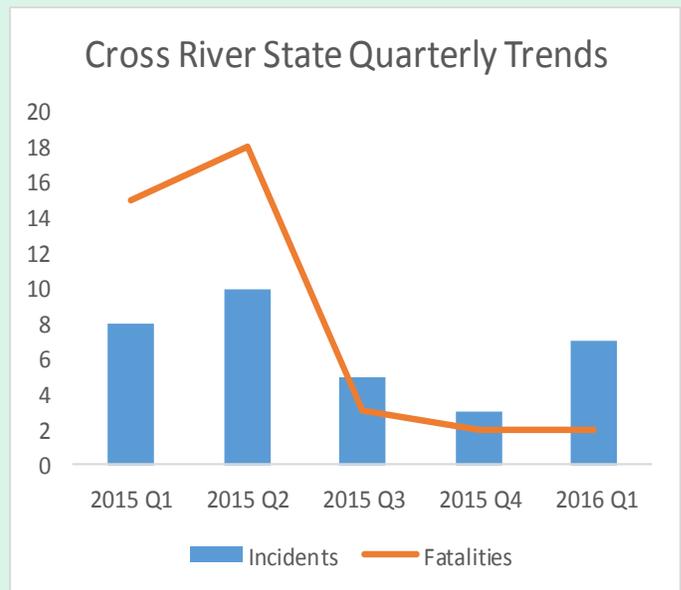
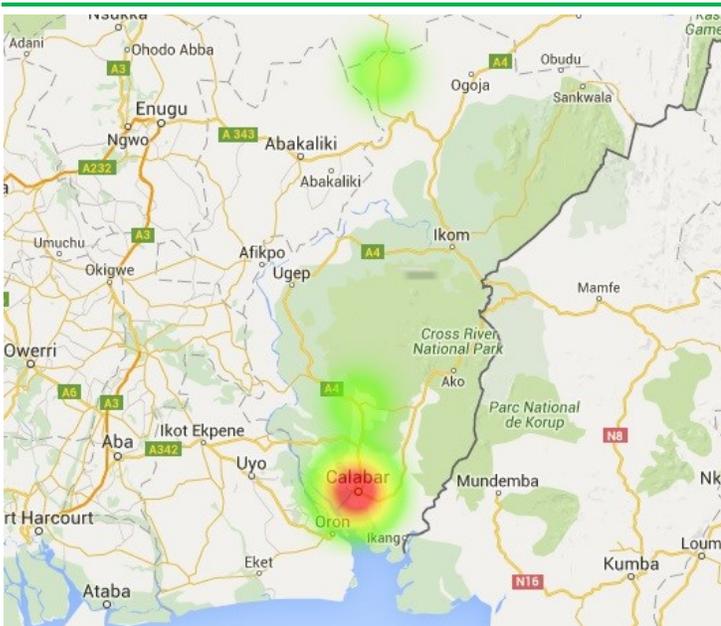
In January, there were reports of kidnappings and vandalism of energy infrastructure by militants in Brass and Kolokuma/Opokuma LGAs, as well as reported clashes between ex-militants and government security forces.

In February, ex-militants reportedly hijacked a chemical tanker off the coast of Nigeria near Brass, and kidnapped five expatriates. Also in February, a 35-year old nephew of former president Goodluck Jonathan was reported kidnapped and later found dead.



In March, several incidents of criminality, especially cult violence, piracy and robbery, were reported. Three students of the Niger Delta University (NDU) were reported shot dead by rival cult members in Southern Ijaw. In a separate incident, gunmen attacked a police station in Amassoma and carted away arms and ammunition. Also, incidents of bank robberies were reported in Yenagoa and Southern Ijaw LGAs, as well as several incidents of piracy in Ekeremor and Nembe LGAs.

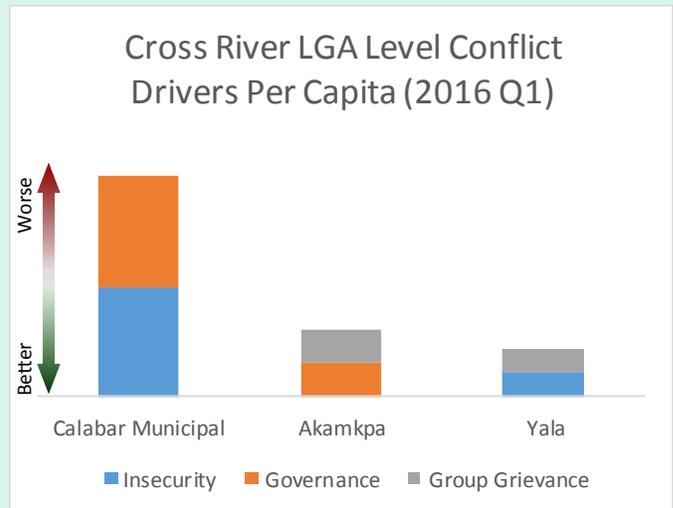
Patterns and Trends in Conflict Risk: Cross River



Following the transfer of the Bakassi peninsula to Cameroonian authority in August 2013, there was a reduction in insecurity and violence in Cross River. However, there was a rise in violence between 2015 Q1 and Q2, driven by political tensions and criminality. In January 2015, nine people were reported killed during a jailbreak in Calabar South. In March 2015, in the context of the political tensions ahead of the general elections, four people were reported killed and 15 others injured during a clash between PDP and Labour Party (LP) supporters in Yakurr. This was followed by a reduction in conflict risk and violence in 2015 Q3 and Q4.

Communal, Political, and Cult Violence

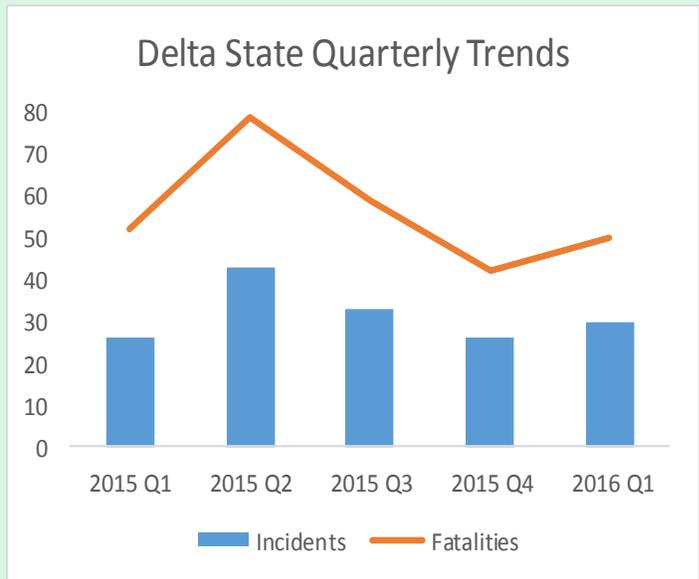
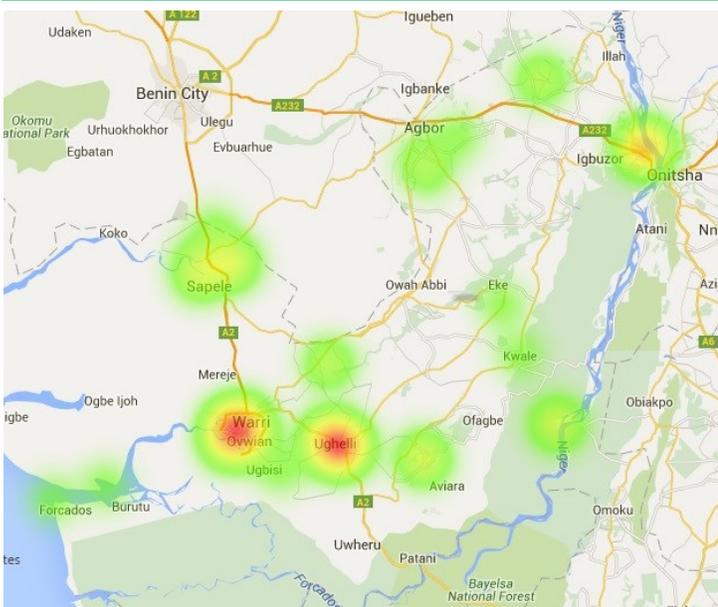
Conflict risk factors in 2016 Q1 included communal violence, criminality, and protests. In January 2016, 15 people were reported injured and 11 homes burnt during an inter-communal clash in Yala LGA. Other communal tensions were also reported in Yakurr, which have since escalated as of April 2016. In February, a young man was reportedly shot dead in a battle between cult groups. In a related incident, another person was killed in a suspected reprisal attack in Obudu. Also in February, assassination attempts were reported when gunmen attacked the homes of two prominent political personalities in Calabar.



Protests

There were several reported incidents of protests in the state during the quarter. In March, youths from Akamkpa and Akpabuyo LGAs reportedly protested the poor quality of the road leading to the community where a cement plant is located. Separately, there were reported protests in Akamkpa and Obubra LGAs over an alleged government plan to clear forest land to make way for the construction of a highway.

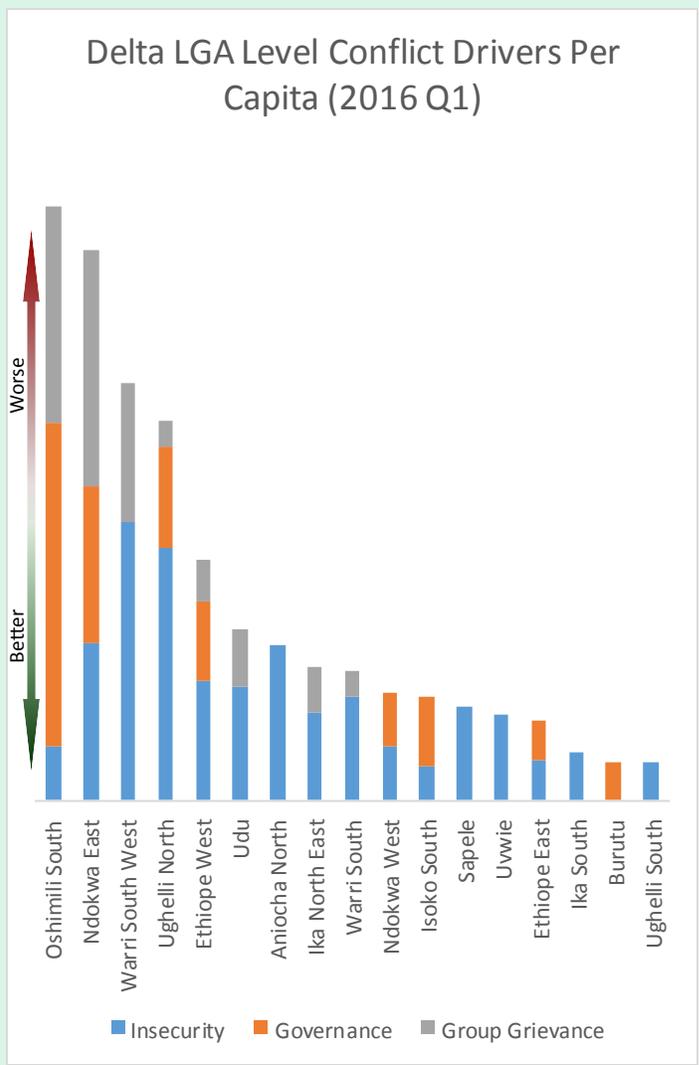
Patterns and Trends in Conflict Risk: Delta



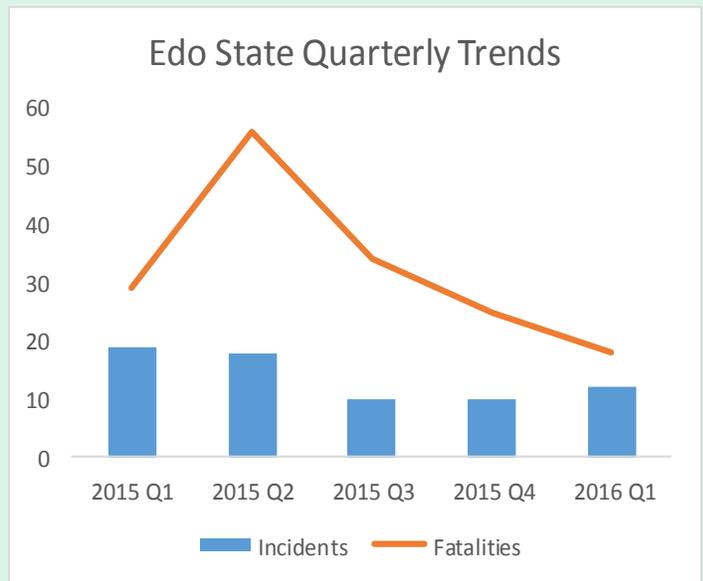
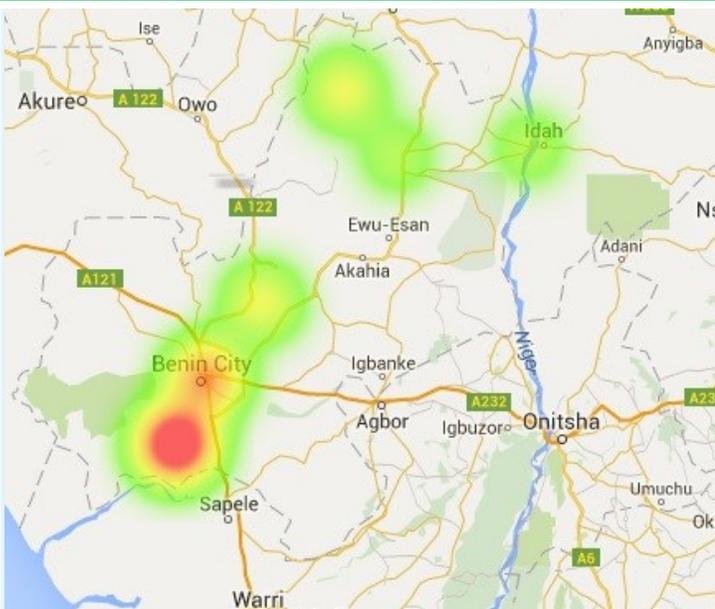
Delta has been one of the most violent states in the Niger Delta since 2009, although recently has been overtaken by Rivers. During the second quarter of 2015, there was an upward trend in violence, including incidents of political tensions during the House of Assembly elections. This was followed by a downward trend in conflict and fatalities from the third quarter of 2015. Criminality, inter-communal tensions, political violence, cultism and land disputes contributed to high levels of violence and fatalities during the first quarter of 2016.

In January 2016, there were incidents of unrest and attacks on energy infrastructure, with the reported destruction of crude oil pipelines and flow stations by suspected militants in Warri South West. The attack was met with the deployment of public security forces to the affected community. Conflict between herdsmen and farmers was also prevalent during the quarter, including the abduction and murder of a traditional leader in Aniocha North.

During the quarter, inter-communal conflict caused multiple fatalities, including the escalation of a boundary dispute between Aladja and Ogbe-Ijaw communities in Udu and Warri South West LGAs. A clash between Ijaw youths and Urhobo women spilled over into several days of inter-communal conflict in late March. Several protests were also reported during the period, including a protest by women over disputed land that was sold to an oil company, which led to a physical altercation with soldiers. On a per capita basis, most reported incidents of violence and fatalities during the quarter were concentrated in Oshimili South, Ndokwa East, Warri South West and Ughelli North LGAs.



Patterns and Trends in Conflict Risk: Edo



There has been decrease in conflict fatalities in Edo state since the second quarter of 2015, at the height of the cult violence. However, political, communal, and criminal violence persisted in 2016 Q1. Beyond Q1, political tensions surrounding the upcoming gubernatorial election in September 2016 will be important to monitor.

Political Tensions

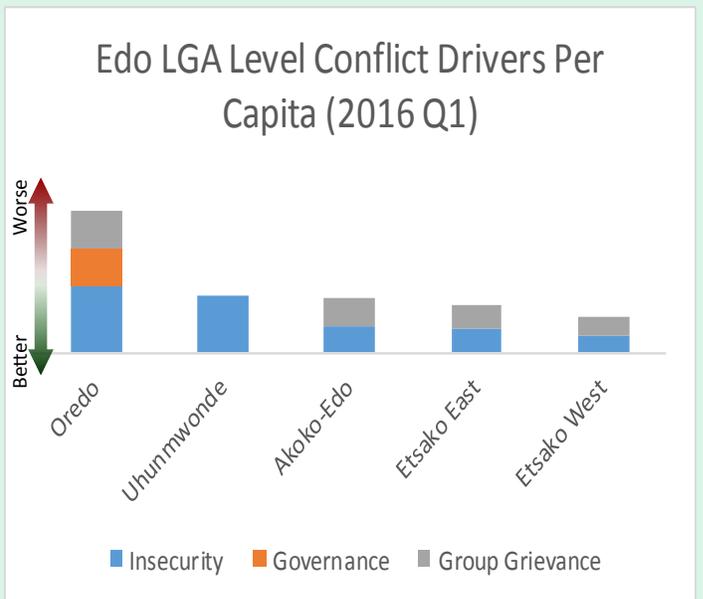
Ahead of the September 2016 gubernatorial elections, political tensions remain elevated. There were several reported protests and violent rallies by supporters of the APC and PDP in the state. Tensions within the APC led to a protest in early February. Later in the month, thugs wielding dangerous weapons reportedly attacked the home of a senatorial chairman of the APC during a political meeting in Egor LGA.

Cult Violence

Cult violence remained prevalent, with associated fatalities. Cult clashes, including reprisals between the Neo Black Movement and Mafite confraternities, killed several people in January and February, especially in and around Oredo. In February, a leader of a cult group who was a revenue collector at a market was reportedly shot dead by suspected members of a rival cult group in Egor.

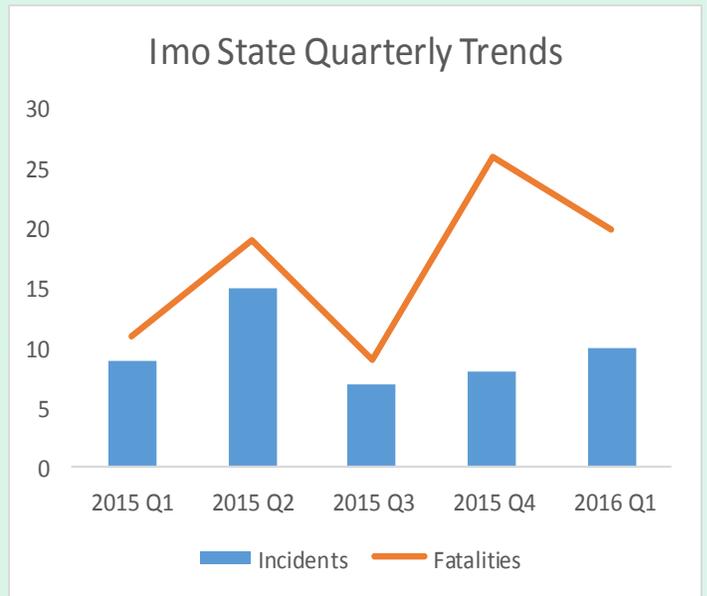
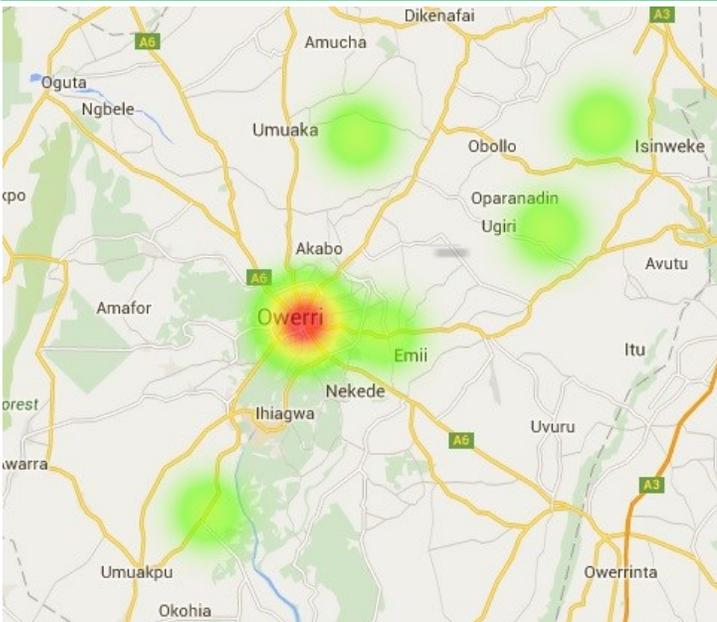
Communal Violence:

Land disputes and inter-communal violence also occurred. Conflict between pastoralists and community vigilantes reportedly



led to lethal clashes and kidnappings. Separately, in February at least one person was reported killed in a land dispute in Etsako East. In March, five people were reported killed in an intra-communal land dispute and leadership tussle in Uhunmwonde. In a separate incident, two fatalities were reported in inter-communal land disputes in Akoko-Edo.

Patterns and Trends in Conflict Risk: Imo



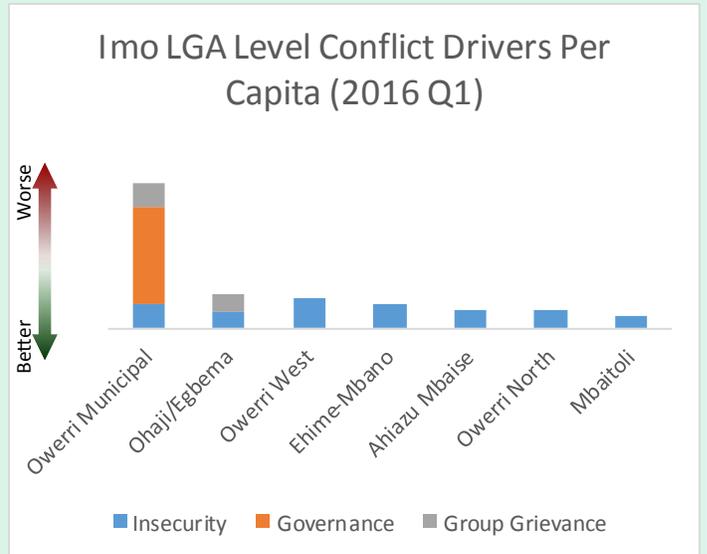
Lethal violence decreased in 2016 Q1 after December 2015, when about ten people were reportedly killed in an intra-communal clash over a traditional kingship in Oguta LGA. Issues in Q1 included communal violence, cult violence, and protests.

Cult Violence and Criminality

In February, cultists reportedly threatened to attack residents of Anara community in Isiala Mbano, after police had arrested several cultists during a initiation ceremony. In March, four fatalities were reported in a clash between two communities over the killing of a boy by cultists from one of the communities in Owerri West. Separately, ten people including three security guards from an oil company were reported killed during a clash between two rival cult groups in Ohaji/Egbema LGA. The publisher of a local magazine was reported kidnapped and later released in Owerri North. Separately, a woman was reportedly raped and strangled to death at her farm in Ehime Mbano.

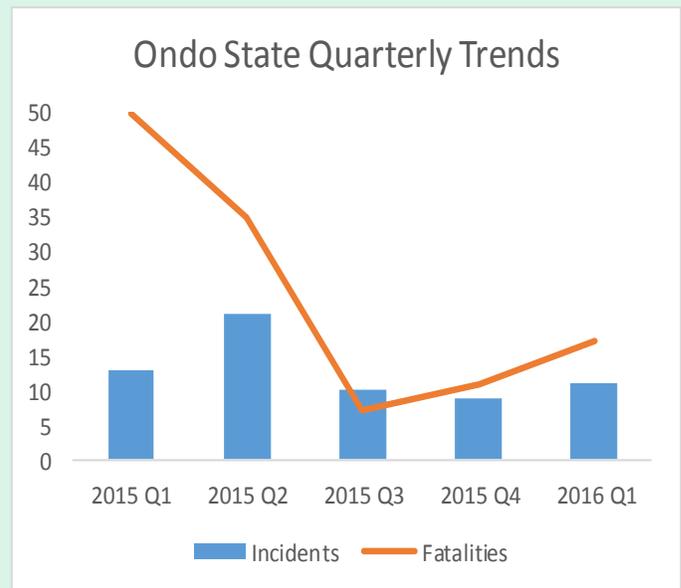
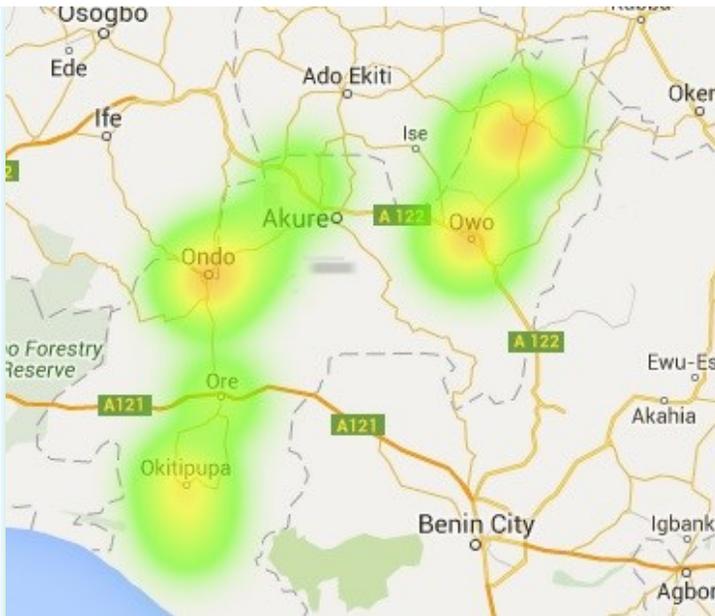
Protests

In January 2016, protests by organized labor continued over the sacking of thousands of workers by the state government. Protests continued into February, with reported clashed between demonstrators and security agents in the state capital. A medical doctor was reported shot by the police during a protest by the state chapter of the Nigerian Labor Congress (NLC) over the state government policy on the concession of some public institutions. Separately, security agents were reported deployed in



Owerri, the state capital, to disperse workers who were protesting salary compensation issues.

Patterns and Trends in Conflict Risk: Ondo



The levels of conflict risk and fatalities were relatively low during the first quarter of 2016 in comparison with the first quarter of 2015 when there were a number of fatalities associated with bank robbery incidents. During the first quarter of 2016, issues of conflict risk related mainly to cult violence, protests, and some political tensions.

Cultism

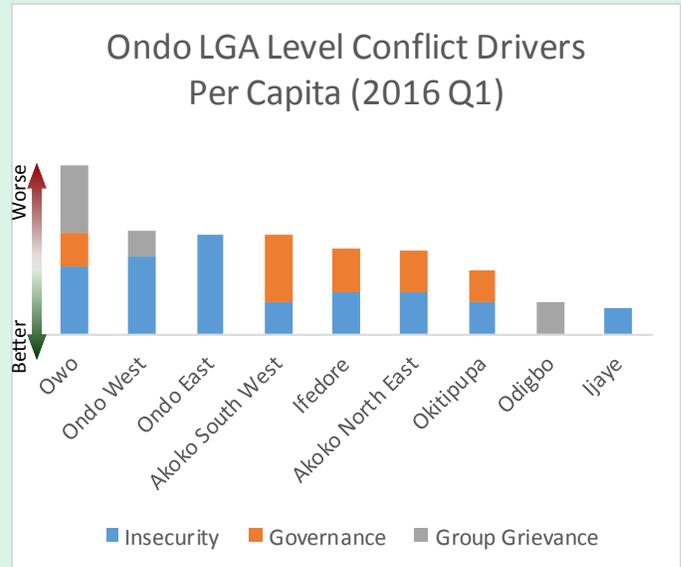
In February, three fatalities were reported in clashes between rival cult groups in Owo and Ondo West LGAs. In March, two people were reported killed in a clash between members of Eiyé confraternity and a rival cult group in Owo.

Protests

Protests during the quarter included one by youths over alleged abuses and indiscriminate arrests by public security agents in Owo. Separately, several people were reported killed during a protest over an automobile accident. Also, there was a reported protest over electricity power outages in Okitipupa.

Political Tensions

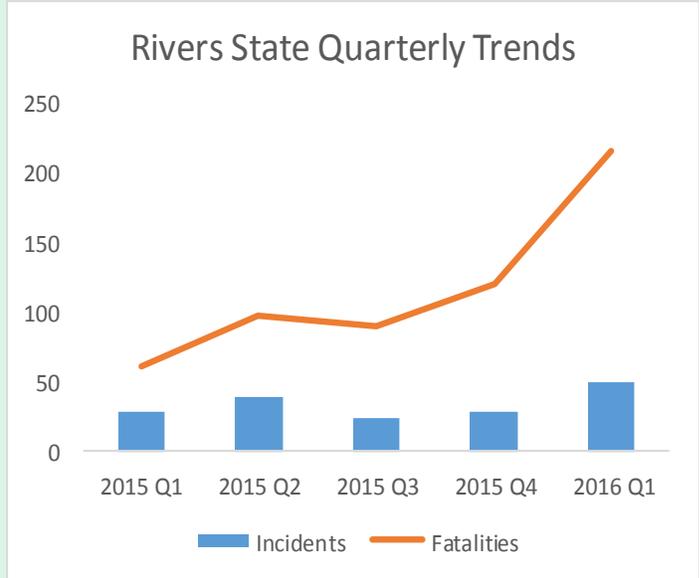
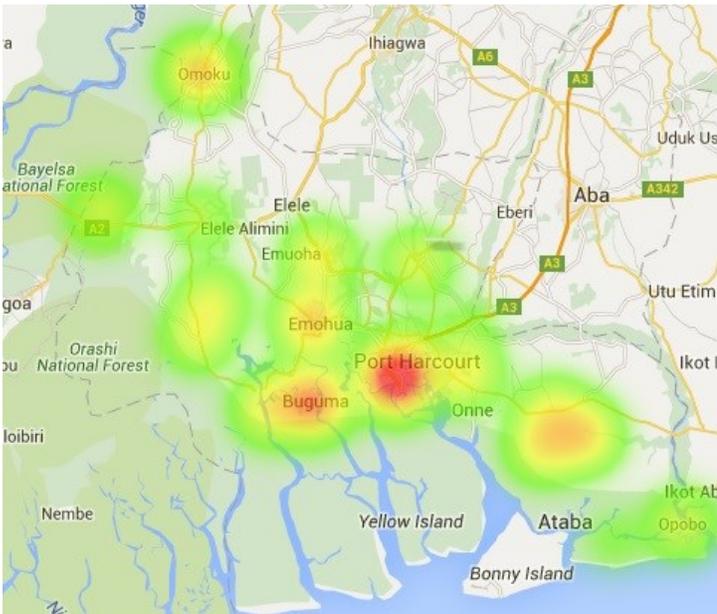
In the context of the up-coming gubernatorial elections in the state, two fatalities were reported in a clash among members of the APC over the choice of a governorship candidate. In a separate incident, there was a protest by a group of women over the impeachment of a female speaker of the state House of Assembly, who was later reinstated.



Other Issues

In January, there was a reported clash between commercial bus drivers and youths in Ifedore LGA over frequent road fatalities involving buses passing through communities. In January, suspected members of the Anti-Forestry Encroachment Taskforce were reportedly arrested after allegedly killing a farmer in Ondo West LGA.

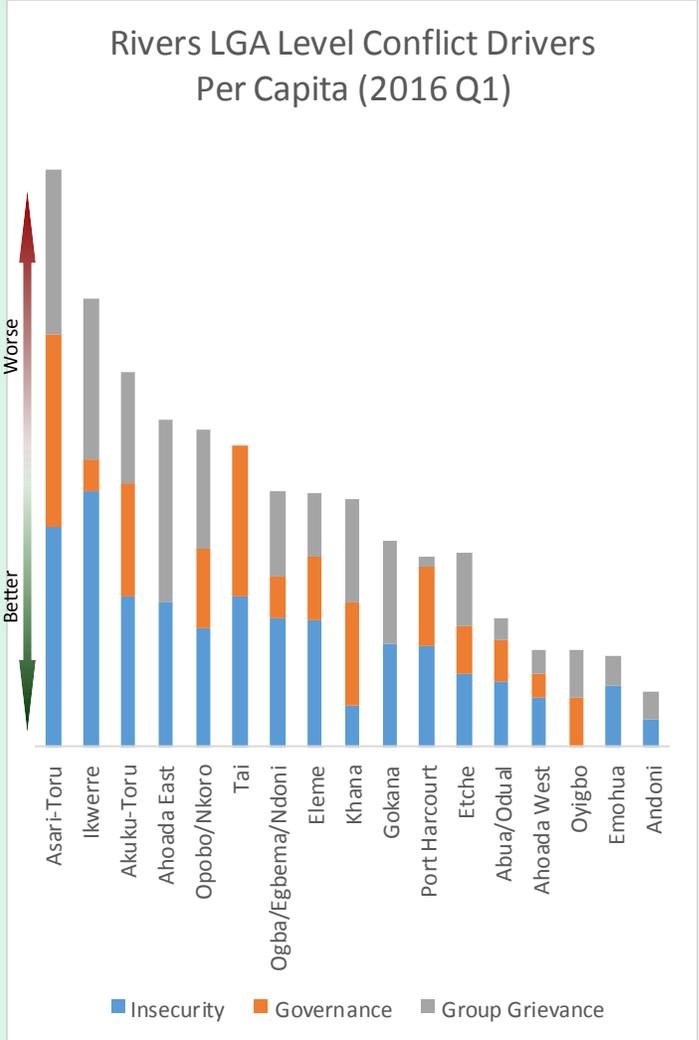
Patterns and Trends in Conflict Risk: Rivers



Rivers state was more violent during the first quarter of 2016 than it has been since 2009. The upward trend in conflict risk and fatalities reached its peak during the first quarter of 2016, largely driven by the lead up to the parliamentary re-run elections on the 19th of March. Political tensions and cult violence have been elevated in the state since early 2015. In the run-up to the March elections, a former State House of Assembly member was shot dead in Obio/Akpor. Separately, the state liaison office of a senatorial candidate was reportedly razed by suspected political thugs in Khana.

During the election re-run period, dozens of fatalities were reported in the state. The elections were characterized by widespread violence, and members of the National Youth Service Corps were reported killed in Akuku-Toru and Ahoada West LGAs. In Ikwerre, a staff of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) was reportedly shot dead. Several fatalities were reported in clashes between suspected political thugs in Port Harcourt, Tai and Abua/Odual LGAs.

In January, there were reported protests by ex-militants over the Amnesty Program. In February, the house of an ex-militant accused of gun-running was reported demolished by soldiers in Gokana. There was also frequent cult violence, including eight reported fatalities during a supremacy battle between rival cult groups in Omoku community in Ogba/Egbema/Ndoni LGA. On a per capita basis, Asari-Toru LGA had the most conflict incidents during the quarter.



About 

The Foundation for Partnership Initiatives in the Niger Delta (PIND) is a not-for-profit organization that develops innovative partnerships for peacebuilding and sustainable livelihoods in the Niger Delta. PIND has developed a Peace Map to bring together data on peace and conflict for validation, triangulation and multi-stakeholder collaboration.

About 

The Fund for Peace (FFP) is committed to promoting sustainable human security around the world, and is the international coordinating partner for P4P, an initiative supported by PIND. FFP has been working with local civil society in Nigeria to develop to develop peacebuilding initiatives since 2010.

About the projects



IPDU: The Integrated Peace and Development Unit (IPDU) of PIND responds to emerging threats and mobilizes appropriate actors and resources for preventive interventions.

P4P: Partners for Peace (P4P) is a network of peace actors whose mission is to build social capital around peacebuilding by amplifying the voices of positive actors, and collaborating on activities for conflict early warning, management, and prevention.

Report Incidents: IPDU Early Warning System

Please report any verified incident of conflict to the IPDU SMS early warning system:

Text: 080 9936 2222

Incident Details: Kindly include the State, LGA, Town, Date, and Brief Incident Description

Contact Us

Inquiries: Afeno Super Odomovo

IPDU Research Coordinator

Telephone: 08172401595

