



# CONFLICT PROFILES

FOR 10 LGAs IN  
FIVE NIGER DELTA STATES

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## FOR 10 LGAs IN FIVE NIGER DELTA STATES

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# INSIGHT

Over 80% of the conflicts in the Niger Delta are resource-based. Often, such conflicts induce boundary claims that further propagate violence. In the non-oil producing agrarian communities of Delta, Bayelsa and Rivers states, incidents of prolonged conflicts often involve land. The inhabitants of these non-oil producing communities are highly reliant on arable farming and fishing for their livelihoods and food security. This has generated unhealthy competition especially where the lands are located on territorial boundaries.

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# INTRODUCTION

The Niger Delta region of Nigeria lies between latitudes 4° and 6° north of the Equator and Longitude 4° and 8° east of the Greenwich Meridian. With an estimated land mass of 20,000 km<sup>2</sup>, the region comprises of the six states of Nigeria's South-South geopolitical zone: Akwa Ibom, Bayelsa, Cross River, Edo, Delta, and Rivers, as well as parts of Imo, Abia and Ondo states. The region has one of the world's most extensive mangrove forests and accounts for over 60% of Africa's. It is inhabited by a collection of over 70 autonomous ethnic nationalities practicing Christianity, Islam and traditional religions, and a diversity of political affiliations. These multiple diversities create opportunities for conflicts and violence to erupt or escalate in communities in the region making it one of the most volatile in Nigeria.

The Niger Delta region was relatively stable and peaceful from pre-colonial times to the dawn of Nigeria's political independence. However, with the discovery of oil in the region in the 1950s the demand for land by oil prospecting firms increased, thereby creating unhealthy competition with local farmers that began to generate conflicts. In the decades since then, oil firms such as Shell Petroleum Development Company (SPDC), Nigeria Agip Oil Company (NAOC), ExxonMobil, Chevron and Texaco, among others, moved into the region and carry out oil exploration. Their exploration resulted in the destruction of the region's eco-system through pollution and degradation, affecting agriculture and causing widespread food and social insecurity.

This loss of farmland drove farmers within host communities, mostly women and youths, to seek alternative income-generating sources for which they had no skills. The youths attempted to engage with oil companies for employment as contractors and distributors, however their approach was often confrontational and uncoordinated.

The crisis deepened when the Ijaw ethnic group's struggle for self-determination, spearheaded in the 1960s by the late Isaac Adaka Boro, inspired the Ogoni Bill of Rights, a declaration for self-determination and resource control in 1990 by the activists of the Ogoni ethnic group. In 1995 the Nigerian government's execution of several of these activists, including writer Ken Saro-Wiwa, plunged the region into a series of violent confrontations that culminated in the formation of the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND) in 2005 by several militant groups.

Complimentary crisis diplomacy and allied interventions by state and non-state actors, including the Federal Government's amnesty programme, kept these crises from degenerating into civil war and brought the region to its current post-conflict era, with its huge demands for rehabilitation.

## CONCEPTUAL BACKGROUND

Conflict is an inevitable consequence of human interactions. Several schools of thought define conflict as a form of competition over perceived or actual incompatible goals, values or limited resources. Depending on the nature of the parties involved, conflicts occur at different levels and can be classified as: intra-personal, inter-personal, intra-group, inter-group, intra-state, inter-state and international. Conflicts are also classified based on their causal issues: religious, political, social, and economic. Peace and security experts add the categories of resource-based, information-based, value-based, and power-based conflicts.

Whether peacebuilders are engaged in conflict prevention, resolution or transformation, a full understanding of the dynamics of communication and the perceptions of a conflict are imperatives for success. To effectively address conflicts, it is important to profile the conflict by identifying and understand its key actors, causes, issues and trends.

## TYOLOGY OF NIGER DELTA CONFLICTS

The end of the Second World War, and the evolving capitalist economy that followed it, affected the nature of conflicts across the globe. The main theatre of conflicts relocated from inter-state to intra-state. Key actors also changed from military against military to military against armed civilians and, subsequently, civilians against civilians. Also, targets shifted from military troops to civilians. Weapons used declined in size from heavy firearms to small lethal weapons, which increased their availability for use by ill-trained civilians. Another phenomenon that emerged is the evolution of local technologies in the manufacture of improvised explosive devices (IEDs) especially by home-grown violent and extremist organizations (VEOs).

Since the first incidents of violent crisis in the Niger Delta region, many scholars and peace practitioners have used different nomenclatures to classify conflicts there. Irrespective of the terms used, conflicts in the region are mostly political, ethno-religious and resource-based - with resource-based conflicts constituting the highest proportion.

Though political conflicts are minimal in number and intensity, they are often between political leaders of various ethnic groups in the region and often instil bitterness and hate amongst those leaders.

Conflicts rooted in ethnicity, such as those between Hausa/Fulani pastoralists, who are predominantly Muslims, and the majority Christian farmers, have ignited sporadic outbreaks of violence and killings. These conflicts are heightened by similar ethno-religious crises elsewhere in Nigeria and tend to ignite reprisals or replication within communities in the region. For instance, attacks against Christians in Northern Nigeria ignited attacks on Hausa Fulani communities not only in Onitsha, Anambra State, but also in Cable Point, Asaba, Abraka, and Warri in January 2012.

Over 80% of the conflicts in the Niger Delta are resource-based. Often, such conflicts induce boundary claims that further propagate violence. In the non-oil producing agrarian communities of Delta, Bayelsa and Rivers states, incidents of prolonged conflicts often involve land. The inhabitants of these non-oil producing communities are highly reliant on arable farming and fishing for their livelihoods and food security. This has generated unhealthy competition especially where the lands are located on territorial boundaries.

Oil-producing communities also record high incidences of conflicts, often involving oil companies and security agencies. These conflicts arise out of the marginalization against host communities in



access to compensation, employment and scholarship opportunities, as well as inadequate delivery of corporate social responsibility (CSR) projects.

## FACTORS RESPONSIBLE FOR CONFLICTS IN THE NIGER DELTA

It would be erroneous to conclude that the crises in the region are caused by a singular issue. They are sustained by several structural and proximate conditions including:

### Structural Deficiencies in Governance

The Nigerian federation contains structural imbalances that foster injustice among ethnic minorities in the Niger Delta, thereby exacerbating conflicts there. One example is that mineral rights in Nigeria are held by the federal government under the 1999 Constitution, a structure which has been perceived to be unresponsive to the grievances of people in the Niger Delta. As a result, various ethnic groups in the region have made a number of declarations to request for self-determination and resource control.

### The Resource Deposit-Development Divide

At the root of the Niger Delta's conflicts is the prevalence of extreme poverty in the region. Oil exploration has brought huge revenues to the Nigerian government since 1957, accounting for over 60% of the country's GDP. However, the 2006 Niger Delta Human Development Report's analysis showed a sharp contrast between the amount of wealth generated from the region and its state of underdevelopment. The deplorable situation of the region was best expressed in the words of CNN's Tumi Makagbo:

*“A region where time seems to have stood still and where people live the most meagre of existences, leaving them bitter and angry from not having benefitted from the black gold that makes Nigeria Africa's largest producer.”*

The emergence of violence in the region is in some ways an expression of dissatisfaction with the level of development in the region compared to its contributions to the National GDP and relative to other states which contribute far less. This position was affirmed by the words of Ogoni activist Ken Saro-Wiwa shortly before his execution:

*“...we all stand before history. I am a man of peace, of ideas, appalled by the denigrating poverty of my people who live on a richly endowed land, distressed by their political marginalization and economic strangulation, angered by the devastation of their land, their ultimate heritage, anxious to preserve their right to life and to a decent living.”*

This imbalance has acted as a spur to violence for unemployed and vulnerable youths who view it as an option for liberation and access to justice, as well as a means to monetary rewards and enticements.

Another cause of conflicts in the Niger Delta is the negative impact of oil prospecting. The advent of oil exploration brought an influx of foreign companies, most of which were domiciled within the communities where their exploration facilities were located. The relationship between these oil companies and their host communities was characterized by mutual understanding up to 1960s. However, as the negative impacts of oil exploration like river poisoning, oil spillage, and gas flaring intensified, destroying the eco-system of the Niger Delta and shortening the life expectancy of its residents, the oil companies grew less responsive to the demands of their host communities. This led to violent conflicts between the two groups.

Communities have continued to engage oil companies on the fulfilment of their corporate social responsibility (CSR), such as the employment of qualified community members, offers of scholarship opportunities to children and youths, infrastructural support and other human development services. However, as a result of politics and corruption, these CSR frameworks are often not effectively implemented.

### Access to Illicit Arms

There has been a strong network of support for violence in the region. Non-state forces such as militia groups, cult groups and gangs, have had increased access to illicit international arms markets since 2003, leading to a significant escalation in the volume of weapons imported since early 2006. This has been blamed on the strength of arms supply in the region which is done through multiple channels that connect non-state forces with sufficient firepower that empowers them to challenge the authority of Nigeria's military and police forces. In the words of Stephen Davis, security operatives are accomplices in this:

*“With the complicity of security agencies, arms are sometimes being shipped and cleared through conventional logistics systems. Similarly, weapons have been landed at Niger Delta ports with the knowledge and complicity of senior state security officers. Local illicit arms dealers use Niger Delta ports to import weapons through import-export businesses, and then distribute the weapons through their state networks, particularly in Akwa-Ibom.”*

Arms are used during illegal oil bunkering in direct exchange or as part payment for smuggled oil within communities.

### Security Agencies and Internal Security Operations

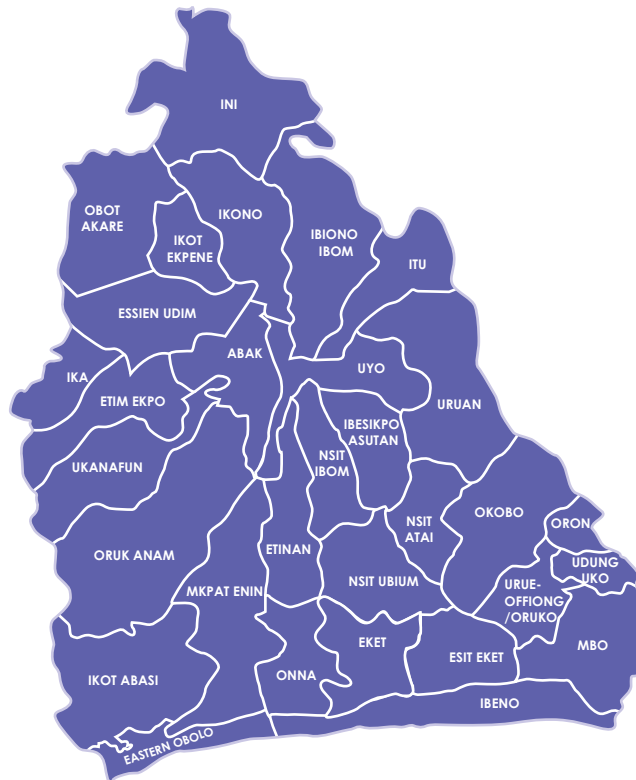
The deployment of military and allied security agencies into the Niger Delta following the upsurge of militancy activities in the region has been criticised by human rights groups. These security operatives have engaged with communities resulting in human casualties. Such attacks have then prompted counter attacks from militant groups in the region.

## CONFLICT PROFILES

The Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS) report of 2011 revealed that a large percentage of households in the five Niger Delta states of Rivers, Bayelsa, Akwa Ibom, and Delta, used unimproved water sources for drinking and had unimproved sanitation. Out of those five states mentioned only Akwa Ibom had a low percentage (3.6%) of households without toilet access (i.e. people using open defecation). In most states open defecation rates ranged from 16.6% to 32.1%, hence the need for effective water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) projects there. Studies have shown that conflicts impact the success of such development projects, or escalate conflicts where they already exist. It is imperative that an assessment and understanding of the conflicts in these five Niger Delta states in order to mainstream conflict sensitivity into development projects and carry out planned WASH projects.

Therefore, as part of promoting the provision of water and sanitation, the UNICEF/PIND WASH project aims to assess the conflict situation in 10 identified LGAs, and build the capacity of local actors to understand and mitigate their local conflicts.

# AKWA IBOM STATE



## CONFLICT PROFILE: NSIT ATAI LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA

Nsit Atai Local Government Area (LGA) of Akwa-Ibom State is situated within an area of about 17,000 square kilometres, shares borders with Uran, Okobo, Nsit Ubium and Ibekpo Asuan LGAs in the state. It is made up of 65 villages that are located within three clans, namely Afaha, Ibedu and Ibiaikot, which is headed by a paramount ruler.

According to the 2006 census in Nigeria, a total of 101,915 people (37,318 males; 74,595 females) live in Nsit Atai local government area. Although Nsit Atai has 13 pre-primary schools, 25 primary schools, nine secondary schools, and 26 adult education centres, as well as some primary health care facilities, most of those schools and facilities are in deplorable conditions. The teacher-student ratio is 1:50 students per physical structures/equipment, while personnel are lacking in the medical centres.

Agriculture provides employment and means of livelihood to the people of Nsit Atai. The fertility rate is very low due to continuous agriculture, resulting in low incomes and a low standard of living in the region. As a result Nsit Atai was classified by the 2005 Economic Study Report as one of the local government areas with a high poverty index.

Basic amenities such as pipe-borne water are in short supply or completely lacking. In the case of Ikot Edong there is no functional bore hole in the entire community, leaving women and children to spend a good part of their day fetching water from a local stream. This lack of such basic amenities creates a ready channel for conflict.

The main causes of conflict in Nsit Atai are chieftaincy tussles, land disputes, land border issues, farm produce harvests and the use of revenues derived from the sales, as well as youth unemployment and the tension and violence between political rival groups.

Some current conflict situations include the land border issues in Ikot Essen which has been ongoing since June 2005, the internally persons displaced as a result of Bakassi returnees ongoing since 2001 and chieftaincy tussles in different communities since 2012. Other communities where conflict has peaked recently include Adia Nsit, Ikot Essen, and Ikot Asua.

### **Conflict Situation in Adia Nsit**

In Adia Nsit an intra communal conflict that resulted from a chieftaincy struggle has disrupted the peace of the community. This Chieftaincy tussle started after the burial of a late traditional leader. As tradition demands, the kingmakers from the four families that make up the village met to decide from which of the four families the next chief would emerge. After the zoning process, Chief Godwin Etim Akpan emerged as the winner. However, the same family from which the new chief emerged rejected his selection on the basis that he was too young to be their leader. Despite the family's refusal to support his leadership, the traditional ruling council certified Chief Akpan as the traditional leader of Adia Nsit community in 2012. This was considered an imposition and the conflict that resulted was based on the perceived high-handedness and lack of sensitivity to the will of the people by the council of traditional rulers.

*"...This leadership crisis started when the other family elected the wrong person (Chief Akpan) as the Chief. The other villagers did not agree so they went and reasoned together and later resolved and chose the right person." (KII, Adia Nsit)*

Although the rejection of Chief Akpan was attributed to the fact that he had been imposed on the community, the real issue of the conflict was that of differing values. The value of leadership of the elderly was the major factor, as Chief Akpan was considered too young to hold the position and an older person within the family would have been preferred.

*"...what the disputants want is that the current chief should step down for an elderly person in the zoned family to rule." (FGD, Woman Adia Nsit)*

However Chief Akpan's backing by the council of traditional chiefs and his support from the neighbouring village have proved to be sustaining elements for the conflict.

The village council and the community development group, Adia Nsit Tomorrow, have been keys for to identifying inroads into the conflict. As indicated in a KII with a businessman in Adia Nsit community, the village council is one of the significant bodies working towards peace in the community.

*"...the village council is working to promote peace and well-being in the area." (Nsima James, KII Adia Nsit)*

Also an FGD participant had this to say with regards to those who promote peace and well-being in the community:

*“...The Adia Nsit Tomorrow group usually gathers people together to plead with and advise them on the need for unity, which is the only way a community can move forward.”*  
**(FGD with men in Adia Nsit)**

The chieftaincy tussle is still a source of tension in the Adia Nsit community.

Another major conflict in Adia Nsit relates to the harvest of palm fruit, which have been worsened by the chieftaincy crisis. With the division and the subsequent suspicion that has pervaded the community, ordinary decisions are misunderstood. In the past, when the village placed sanctions on the harvesting of palm fruit, it was considered something done in the best interest of the community in order to generate good revenue. Now, the affected palm fruit owners routinely express dissatisfaction and question the sharing and use of community-generated revenue.

### **Conflict in Other Communities**

Unlike Adia Nsit, other communities in the LGA where violence is prominent have involved in inter-communal rather than intra-communal conflict. These include Ndon Ekpe which is in conflict with Ikot Ebitta. In January 2014 residents of Ndon Ekpe prevented members of Ikot Ebitta from accessing to the water source in their community by blocking the road. In Ikot Asua the case is a land-related conflict based on palm fruit harvesting with Ikot Akpabio, resulting in threats to life when the chiefs of both villages released their ‘Ekpo’ masquerades to threaten members of the opposing community.

Disagreements arising from palm fruit harvesting often have their roots in tussles for leadership of the community.

*“...There is a particular family that said power resides in their family, contrary to the agreement they had as a family; so some families that make up the village said since they don’t want power to be rotated so that other families can benefit, their palm fruit should not be included whenever they want to plan for harvest.”* **(FGD women’s group, Ikot Asua)**

In August 2013, during the palm fruit harvest season, a collective harvest was organized by the Ikot Asua community. Some individual owners resisted this and attempted to harvest their farms by themselves. These farm owners were beaten up on the orders of the village chief and their properties were destroyed. The matter was taken to court but the case is yet to be resolved.

The families who have been denied leadership are also accused of instigating their youth to cause mayhem during the harvest season.

*“...The families who are denied power and youths in the community are the parties that cause violence. The youth are instigated by those who are denied leadership to cause problem in the community.”* **(FGD women’s group, Ikot Asua)**

Other opinions hold that such crises arise out of some community members’ dissatisfaction with the use of the proceeds from the palm fruit sales. This dissatisfaction is often connected to the erosion of trust resulting from the leadership conflict in the community.

*“...The crises result as inequalities that exist in sharing resources and power. Palm fruit harvest crises exist due to dissatisfaction of the community members on the use of money realized from palm fruit harvest.”* **(FGD Youth group, Ikot Asua)**

Poverty, lack of education, a breakdown in trust from misinformation and poor communication are some of the elements sustaining these conflicts. A structural analysis of each of the situations often point to feelings of marginalization, a perceived exclusion and the denial of rights, as the root cause of these conflicts.

*“The village’s head family who are heading the chieftaincy titles do not allow any other family and youths in the society to benefit from any good thing within, or development brought in for the community.” (FGD Youth group, Ikot Asua)*

The issue of indigeneship further buttresses these feelings of exclusion. Focus group discussions in the various communities show that the current leadership often consider the aggrieved families as being non-indigenes of the community and as such should not be entitled any leadership position.

Establishing understanding amongst the disputants through dialogue with the aim of achieving fairness in power rotation would be an effective approach for achievement of peace in these communities. In cases where conflict involves palm fruit harvests, peace approaches should aspire to remove the identified elements sustaining the conflict.

Another community resource-based dispute is the recurrent conflict between Ikot Essen and Oron community over border land. This conflict started in the early 2000s and has been ongoing for some years. Conflict trends in the community have shown that this conflict especially manifests during planting seasons when land needs to be ploughed and planted. Women from both sides have been harassed by youth from the opposing community whenever they attempt to work on the portion of land in contention leading to the abandonment of the land in question. The conflict has been attributed to insufficient farm lands in both communities and the lack of a clear demarcation between the communities, as well as the rejection of an old sharing arrangement made by their ancestors, an unclear history and lack of documentation of land ownership, and the rapid population growth in the area.

Another source of conflict in the community is the scarcity of water, particularly during the dry seasons of November to March. This shortage of water leads to conflict and competition over the scarce resources, and many times results in violence.

One group which is working to promote peace in the community is the Ikot Essen Youth Group. They are known to have played peace-making roles in conflicts within the community in the past and would be an available inroad into solving the conflict.

## **CONFLICT PROFILE: OBOT AKARA LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA**

Obot Akara LGA of Akwa Ibom State is made up of 73 communities, and has a population of 148,281 people (76,579 males and 71,702 females). It is located in the North East of Akwa Ibom State and shares a boundary with Abia State in the north and Ikot Ekpene, Ikono, Ini and Essiea Udim local government areas. There are three clans in the LGA - Obot-Akara, Uto Edina and Ikot Abia - headed by a paramount ruler.

The people of Obot Akara are predominantly farmers but some are hunters and craft makers. The people strongly identify with cultural practices and traditions such as masquerades, folklores and dances. There are many who have embraced the Christian faith as indicated by the number of schools, hospitals and other facilities built and maintained by Christian organizations.



Obot Akara Local Government Area lacks major infrastructure and amenities. Many communities have dilapidated roads and bridges, and although there are some primary and secondary schools, there is a dearth of teachers for them. Health centres and police stations are also few and far apart.

Obot Akara shares boundaries with neighbouring states making issues of security key to assessing its conflict situation. In January 2013, the LGA had a crime rate of 95% with rampant cases of robbery and kidnapping.

Although conflicts in the LGA were attributable to a variety of factors, ranging from competition for land, unemployment and poverty to lack of amenities, natural disasters and environmental degradation, most conflicts in Obot Akara arose mainly out of leadership selection issues. Some of the most conflict-prone communities in the LGA include Abama, Usaka Annang, Ikot Obutk, Nto Ekpu Ikot, Ikot Utin and Esa Ikwen.

Land-related conflict was most common in Okop, Ikot Okun, Ikot Utin, Ikot Obuk, Nto Ekpu Ikot, Abama and Usaka Annang communities, especially during the farming season.

### **Conflict Situation In Usaka Anang And Abama**

Usaka Anang and Abama are boundary communities and their major conflict issues have been land disputes with neighbouring communities in Abia State. The conflict situations often involve elders from the communities who want control over communal land. Sometimes, the youths from both communities clash over small issues which then escalate to crises. These conflicts usually occur during the planting season and are sparked when one community perceives the other to be 'trespassing' in order to cultivate or expand their farmland. As expressed by a participant in the FGD for women in Abama community:

*"The conflict, according to our elders in the past, led to killing of people, especially women who either went to farm to harvest non-timber products to earn a decent living for themselves. These harassments usually happen during farming season when land preparation commences, in view of this, women have always been victim of the situation. In order to reduce this, our husbands always follow us to farm during the planting season, which is not easy for them to leave their businesses. The situation is not always every year but one cannot determine when it will happen but we always prepare for this situation when the planting season is approaching."*

In 2009 Usaka Anang erupted into a series of violent clashes which lasted for about one year and saw the killings and disappearances of members of both communities.

In Abama the conflict dates back to 1970, immediately after the Nigerian Civil War during which Abama had taken up arms against the Ndong community in a fight for the ownership of a parcel of farmland. The most recent case of violence was recorded in 2013 during which several lives were lost, women were raped and property was damaged. However in the last two years many of the conflicts between the communities have been addressed in a non-violent way.

Both the Abia and Akwa Ibom state governments have had to engage with the disputing communities, setting up a military patrol team to ensure that they did not resort to violence. Though there has not been any record of extreme violence in the area recently, the area still retains a very tense and highly volatile atmosphere. This situation could easily explode with the slightest trigger.

Youth are on the alert constantly watching for what they term "any strange movement and behaviours from non-natives of Abama."

The lack of proper documentation of physical boundaries separating the two local governments in the two states is another major cause of the conflict. A strong suspicion of collaborators within the community has made some members of Adama more resolved to resist settlement of the boundary issues.

*“The people of Ndorie in of Ikuano LGA of Abia State believed that they are rich and powerful, and with support of their political class could overrun the (Abama) community and grab part of our land for themselves. There are other natives of the (Abama) community who connive with the Ndorie community to acquire land forcefully. We the people of Abama are not ready to cede any part of our land to other communities hence we will protect it from intruders.” (FGD with men in Abama)*

Another factor that may be sustaining the conflict is politicians who are stirring negative sentiments to attract political points amongst their people. The LGA chairmen of both communities are critical stakeholders in the situation as they are often suspected of providing financial aid to support and execute conflicts.

*“The role of the politician is to support them (communities) financially in order to gain support during the elections for their ability to acquire or seize the land.” (FGD with men in Abama)*

Some groups working to promote peace and well-being in the area include the Abama Youth Development Association, the Nka Iban Women Group and the men’s group. These could be used as inroads into the conflict based on their peace agenda.

Other conflicts in Abama include the perceived oppression of the youth by community elders which has created a perpetually tense atmosphere between the two groups. Other conflict situations in Abama might be impacted and coloured by this tension and should be factored into any interventions and approaches for peace.

### **Conflict Situation in Ikot Obuk**

In Ikot Obuk there are several issues of internal conflict, including a land dispute with the neighbouring community of Ikot Upong, as well as issues between the youth and the elders resulting from the way proceeds from the sale of palm fruit are managed. This situation is aggravated by youth unemployment, bad roads, inadequate market structures, and suspicions of elders embezzling community funds. Because most youth in the community are unemployed, they see the proceeds from the economic tree as their main source of income and as such insist on monitoring its sharing and utilization. As is the case in Abama, this situation pitches the youth against the elders in community and takes a toll on the community as a whole.



# RIVERS STATE



## CONFLICT PROFILE: AKUKU-TORU LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA

The Akuku Toru Local Government Area of Rivers State is a riverine area with a landmass of 1,443 square kilometres, and a population of 156,006 people. Fishing and trading are its predominant livelihood activities. It shares boundaries with Degema and Asari-Toru LGAs of Rivers State, Nembe LGA of Bayelsa and the Atlantic Ocean. It is centrally positioned and easily accessible to many neighbouring local government areas such as Bonny, Degema, Asari-Toru and Abua/Odua.

Akuku-Toru is comprised of over 192 smaller communities and settlements with seven major towns: Abonnema, Obonoma, Kula, Idama, Abissa, Soku and Elem-Sangama. Other prominent communities and fishing settlements include Abaji Okolo, Imoama, Leleama, Ibiapuama, Dere Ama, Opukiri, Lelekiri and Angalaobio. The local government area is blessed with abundant oil and gas reserves. Kula, Idama and Soku have networks of oil pipelines leading to the Soku and Belema Flow Station, a multimillion-naira gas plant which supplies gas to the liquefied Natural Gas Project at Bonny. Some of the communities with recurrent conflict issues in Akuku-Toru LGA include Kongoma, Elem-Sangama, Nongoma, Kula, Ibiame, Belema, Ekmeama, Saupane, Soku Ahenama, Oluama, Freet Town and New Town, Sangana, Abonema, Ogoni land and Olomaboko.

Unemployment and poverty were ranked as the highest factors affecting conflict in the Akuku-Toru LGA. Other high-ranking factors include insecurity, abduction and killings, corruption of government officials, and gang violence. The main issues of conflict in the different communities in the LGA range from kingship/chieftaincy tussles and battles for power and supremacy between youth groups in Belema since the 1980s, to militants/cult clashes in Elem-Sangama, and a political power struggle that has engulfed in the entire LGA since 2014.

The current political conflict began from the 2015 elections when two chieftains, Honourable Roland Sekibo and Chief Hope Opusingi, from the People's Democratic Party (PDP), clashed over the process of selection of a candidate for the Akuku-Toru constituency of the Rivers State House of Assembly. Hon. Roland Sekibo's candidate was Hon. Precious Jeremiah while Chief Hope Opusingi wanted his uncle Hon. Tonye Alalibo for the seat.

The conflict soon extended to all the communities in Akuku-Toru Local Government Area, later degenerating to a point where different cult groups were drawn into it, resulting in violence. It was expected that the conflict would be resolved after the 2015 general elections; however it is still ongoing. It has particularly hampered economic activities in the Belema, Offoin Ama, Idama, Sangama, and Abissa communities.

Resource-based conflicts are the most common types of conflict in the LGA, and disagreements over money and natural resource appropriation are the top causes of conflict in the LGA. Value-based conflicts and issues of biological needs also are common. Some of the key issues that spark conflict in the LGA include the embezzlement of community development funds, oil-bunkering activities, the selection processes for chieftaincy/leadership positions, the control and distribution of community resources, as well as the allocation of job and contract opportunities in the oil industry.

### **Conflict Situation in Belema**

In Belema the main conflict issue is the tussle over the kingship of the community, as well as the struggle for supremacy between the Ijaw Youth Council and the Niger Delta Volunteer Force, which culminated in violent clashes.

The kingship tussle, which began in the 1980s, engulfed the entire community and has led to litigation. Leaders from three different lineages are contending for the position of the Amayanabo (king) of Belema community. The parties in contention are Chief Bourdilon Oko, Chief Ibinabo Kala-Oriye, and Chief Opu-Eze and the leaders and representatives of the Belema Youth who are struggling to be recognized as relevant stakeholders by multinational and oil servicing companies. All the parties involved lay claim to the throne and insist that the king of Belema must come from their faction. The matter, which is still pending in the court, has left the community without a paramount ruler.

The situation has been complicated by the fact that Belema is an oil-rich community and each party desires to control its resources. In a bid for survival, and to partake of the community's available resources, various groups often form alliances with parties of common interest. A GMOU with the Shell Petroleum Development Company of Nigeria (SPDC) means that monies accrue to the community yearly in the form of community development funds and this long-standing conflict becomes particularly contentious whenever this fund is to be shared in the community, as expressed by an FGD participant in Belema:

*"...the most common things that cause conflict in my area are: struggle for the control of community fund, supremacy of stakeholders, money accruing to the community yearly from GMOU with SPDC from which everyone wants to benefit and have authority in the*

*community. This struggle became violent during Polo Da Apu [compound leaders] elections where people brought cult groups to support certain aspirants, an incident which led to people being seriously injured.”*

Although there are other conflict situations in Belema, for example accusations of community leaders diverting diesel meant for community use or inter-communal clashes arising from fishing and oil installation boundary disputes with the Nembe and Odioma communities in Bayelsa State, the most significant is the competition amongst youth groups for employment opportunities and the control of the community funds.

The supremacy struggle between these youth groups resulted from the formation of factions to protect the interest of those involved in the kingship struggle. The Ijaw Youth Council (IYC) has been at loggerheads with Niger Delta Volunteer Force (NDVF), as well as youths who are members of militant groups, and this has often manifested in violent clashes. Any group that gains domination then chases out the others and secures control of the benefits like surveillance contracts and standby employment slots from the oil companies. They secure these benefits at the expense of the citizens of the community causing tension and division.

The leaders of the youth groups and the chiefs involved in the kingship tussle are the main beneficiaries of the conflicts in the community. The youths affiliate themselves with community leaders who sponsor them financially, especially during elections. It is believed that the youth leaders and chiefs cause these conflict situations to scare away other members of the community from competing for job opportunities or contracts, leaving these beneficiaries to control oil-related funds and enrich themselves with resources meant for the community.

The oil companies are perceived to be ‘shadow’ parties who are benefiting from the situation and so are ensuring its perpetuation from the background. This is expressed in a KII with a member of the Community Development Committee (CDC) in Belema.

*“Other parties involved the conflict are the oil companies operating in the area such as Shell Petroleum Development Company of Nigeria (SPDC) and Chevron who support the various groups to induce conflicts between them to achieve their aim, thereby denying the youth, CDC and the Polo Da Apu of their rights to have access to the companies to negotiate for the overall interest of the community.” (KII, CDC member, Belema)*

Due to the largely oil-related conflicts in the community, the Belema Oil Flow Station operated by Chevron is considered as one of the most problematic in the region.

Those most affected by these conflicts are the community residents, particularly women and the unemployed youth. Most of the stakeholders of the conflict, such as the chiefs, do not live in the village but in Port Harcourt and other cities, making it easier for them to divert funds meant for the community.

This resource-based conflict has been particularly drawn out because all the parties in conflict consider the oil company benefits from as their only means of livelihood, so the fear of returning to ‘poverty and loss of status in the society’ drives their determination to sustain the conflict at all cost, as reflected in a KII with a fish farmer in Belema:

*“They [chiefs and youth leaders] believe that is the only means they can make money. They go by the slogan [in Kalabari language] that goes thus: ‘kuro-kuro fi,’ which means ‘the strongest survive’ [survival of the fittest].”*

The value placed on money has made the conflict nearly intractable. Respected members of the community who could have been involved in the resolution of these issues failed to achieve any peace because, despite the authority they wield, they are too impoverished to convene the conflicting parties.

The leadership tussle that has engulfed Belema is extremely volatile. Although the matter has gone into litigation, all parties are optimistic of victory and are looking forward to the outcome of the case. It is feared that the court ruling could trigger large-scale violence unless something is done to stop this. The court judgment now needs to be watched and efforts made to stop any harmful impacts of the court ruling might have on the people. Large scale sensitization of the implication of an adverse reaction based on the court ruling for the entire community would be needful.

### **Conflict Situation in Elem-Sangama**

One of the current conflict situations in Elem-Sangama is between the SPDC's Community Trust, the Elem Sangama Oil and Gas Committee, and the youth leaders. This conflict started in 2014 after the expiration of the three-year tenure of the SPDC's interface group, the Community Trust (CT). However, the CT's leadership wished to retain the position against the wishes of a majority of the people and this resulted in the community aligning itself into three major groups: the oil and gas committee, the CT, and the Elem-Sangama Youth Movement.

The leadership tussle is believed to actually be a bid to control monies and contracts from the oil companies. Currently, the oil and gas committee controls most of these contracts leaving the youth feeling sidelined. There are allegations that both the CT and the oil and gas committee do not give the youths their due in terms of employment, contracts and other benefits, which forced the youth to write a petition against the leaders of the two groups.

There is also a fight for the position of the technical chairman, which represents the control of skilled labour in the community. The chairman of the oil and gas committee presented a candidate for the position, while the committee secretary presented a different candidate for the position resulting in conflict. In a bid to resolve the issue, the community's chiefs asked the outgoing technical chairman to continue in the position though his tenure had elapsed. This was not acceptable to the two nominees who took the matter to court on the grounds that the community did not have the right to interfere or to impose their choice for the position.

The leaders of the oil and gas committee and the Community Trust are seen as the primary beneficiaries in the conflict as they have used the disputes to usurp opportunities that ought to come to the community.

Other conflict issues in Elem-Sangama include the Amayanabo's attempt to unilaterally impose the regent of Oru Sangama on the people. The Amayanabo's failure to consult with the local chiefs led to their rejection of the regent the suspension of the Amayanabo, and litigation of the matter.

There is also the activity of oil-bunkering cartels in Oru-Sangama and Oluasiri communities, which has resulted in a conflict where buildings were destroyed, fishing boats and nets were burned, and an unspecified number of people were killed people in Elem-Sangama. The crisis also led to the death of one person from Oluasiri before the intervention of the Joint Task Force (JTF) to halt further hostilities. Although the youth of Elem-Sangama were not involved in the initial oil-bunkering activities, the violent conflicts among those groups affects the community as it pollutes the creeks, drastically reducing the fish harvested and disrupts their fishing enterprise.

Militancy and cultism also affect Elem-Sangama and other communities in the Akuku-Toru local government. Apart from clashes and struggles for supremacy and territory, militants disrupt fishing

activities. Some demand dues and homage, seizing fishing gear and boats when they perceive a lack of loyalty to their authority. In September 2015 a militant attack in Oluasiri caused a great deal of tension in the community due to the sound of the rapid gunfire.

In addition to this, attacks by sea pirates are common in Akuku-Toru LGA, especially in the Kula/Abissa axis. The pirates target passengers and traders, stealing personal belongings, kidnapping victims, and raping women and girls in the community. Due to their activities, members of the community are afraid to go fishing or trading, activities on which their survival depends.

*“We are fishermen and women, we depend on the rivers and creek for survival, but the activities of sea pirates have crippled our activities. You will struggle through the night, toil, cast your net and lines. The little fish you will catch will be taken away from you at gunpoint. Government is not doing anything at all. Even the JTF are not doing anything; they only protect the oil workers. There are instances where sea pirates steal our boats, the engine, rape our women and even kidnap passengers. Last year [2014], they kidnapped NYSC members that were posted to the community. The activities of the sea pirates are affecting everyone in Elem-Sangama community.” (FGD with fishermen, Elem-Sangama)*

Finally, an ongoing dispute between Elem-Sangama, Oluasiri and Soku over the ownership of a portion of the land for a proposed gas plant, which began over 15 years ago, still manifests as violent clashes from time to time. The issue is yet to be resolved and has now involved both the Rivers and Bayelsa state governments as key actors. All the communities involved now await the federal government’s verdict on the boundary adjustment.

Some respected persons in the community who are trusted and considered as able to engage in unbiased interventions in conflict issues within the community include Elder Frank Thomas, Elder Promise Alalibo, and Madam Ibiere James. These individuals have been engaging in mediating and settling disputes within the community and would be good entry points in addressing the identified conflict issues in the community.

### **Conflict Situation in Olomaboko and Kula**

The major conflict in Olomaboko community is the fight for territorial control between two militant groups: Olomaboko MEND and Kula MEND. The emergence of another militant group, The Mariners has further complicated the conflict. Other prominent conflict issues include the competition between Nembe and the Kula boat operators over their coastal routes, and ongoing leadership struggles among the youth and for the community’s kingship title.

The main occupation in both Olomaboko and Kula is fishing from the Sombrayo River. The river is linked to the Atlantic Ocean making it easy to access by militants from both sides. The region has provided lucrative business for the militants who collect a fee from oil bunkerers passing through the route.

Although militants from both communities belong to the same group, the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND), they are essentially autonomous and each group tries to protect its own interest. This has led to disagreements between the two groups as each try to assert control over the river. The disagreements degenerated into a shootout and resulted in the death of a Kula youth. The Kula MEND accused the Olomaboko MEND of causing the killing and this led to the destruction of Abaki-Okolo and a breakdown of economic activities in the region. Other communities such as Okparakiri and Iborokiri were also affected by the crisis.

The Mariners emerged as a means of checkmating a group of youth who decided to also go into the collection of ‘settlement fees’ from bunkerers and were terrorising the Olomaboko community. In

order to challenge the other rival groups engaged in the same activities these youth joined MEND as a faction in exchange for arms and ammunitions. The resulting weapons were used to intimidate residents of communities across the region. This spurred some other youth to create yet another militia group: the Mariners.

The Mariners and the MEND of Olomaboko engaged in fierce attacks against each other along the coastal routes as they fought for control of the territory. Although the clashes have drastically reduced the situation remains in a state of slippery peace.

The Sombrayo River is also a source of competition among the fishermen for the best fishing spots in the river. Addressing conflict in this community would require that the river is factored as a source of conflict and included in conflict management efforts.

### **CONFLICT PROFILE: OPOBO/NKORO LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA**

Opobo/Nkoro is one of the riverine communities in Rivers State. The LGA has a land area of 130 square kilometres and shares boundaries with Andoni LGA and Khana LGA and with Okirika and Bonny LGAs, though separated by water. Opobo/Nkoro is made up of 16 communities, including Opobo Town. The predominant sources of livelihood in the communities are trading, fishing and farming.

Although 71% of questionnaire respondents said there were no notable conflicts in the LGA, Kalasunju and Ekereborokiri were identified as communities which had significant conflict situations. The conflict issues in the LGA included land disputes, fishing rights, leadership, poor sanitary conditions, poor access to potable water, and clashes for recognition and control. Other forms of conflict in the past included indigene-settler issues which resulted in litigations.

Money and political power struggles between youth and chiefs were seen as the major factors for conflict in the LGA. Unemployment and poverty were also among the highest-ranking factors affecting conflict. A poor educational system, as well as poor water and sanitation were also identified as key factors affecting conflict in the LGA.

The key actors in conflicts across the LGA included the local chiefs, the youths, some traditional rulers, and members of the political class.

#### **Conflict Situation in Iwoama-Nkonro and Kalasunju**

Communities such as Iwoama-Nkonro and Kalasunju do not have any major conflicts currently beyond day-to-day incidents of minor interpersonal conflict, which usually do not escalate beyond the conflicting parties.

In Iwoama-Nkonro there are no significant conflict situations in the community currently, or in the last three years.

An isolated incident concerning the allocation and distribution of community resources was recorded in 2014. This incident caused a division amongst the elders, but was quickly settled without any further escalation.

In Kalasunju, the most recent major conflict was a land dispute between Kalasunju and Okoroboile in Andoni Local Government Area in 2013. The conflict manifested when the people of Okoroboile went into the Kalasunju forest to fell trees and fetch wood. The youth of Kalasunju intercepted them and queried them on their mission in the forest. The confrontation deteriorated into violence and the Nigeria Police and the Navy, as well as the chairmen of the two local government areas, had to step in to quell the violence and settle the conflict.



Although there is currently no major conflict situation in the community, there are some factors that have the potential to provoke conflict in Kalasunju. These include political rivalries - although the community's ability to adopt a zoning system for political positions and posts have enabled them manage such disagreements - and an unequal distribution of community resources which might provoke disputes.

The very low record of major conflict in the community could be attributed to binding factors within the community such as faith/religion, respect for values such as family ties, and a general social cohesion.

*"We all attend the same church together. The church we all attend is the St. Mary's Anglican Communion, because everyone in Kalasunju or nearly everyone is an Anglican. In the month of August, the community celebrates the Iri Ji Mmiri and Oka Mmiri festivals. The community also plays Nwaotam Festival on the 25th of December during Christmas. We also play the Owu Festival during December. We also have the community's annual meeting on the 26th of December, immediately after the Nwaotam Festival. On the 27th of December, each of the compounds in Kalasunju come together to have their own meetings. That means that all the five compounds i.e. the Senibo Ngia Kalasunju Dappa Compound, the Senibo Sunday Kalasunju Dappa Compound, the Senibo Zachariah Kalasunju Dappa Compound, the Senibo Harrison Kalasunju Dappa Compound, and the Senibo Moses Kalasunju Dappa Compound all have their compound meetings on the 27th of December."*  
**(FGD with youth, Kalasunju Community)**

### **Conflict Situation in Ekereborokiri**

In Ekereborokiri, a land tussle between the community and neighbouring Ikorolo in Andoni LGA is an ongoing conflict situation. Ikorolo community is considered to have intruded into land belonging to Ekereborokiri to fell trees and to bury dead bodies. This has sparked major conflict between both communities. Ikorolo has a much larger population and the Ekereborokiri fear displacement as a result of Ikorolo taking over their community in the course of the conflict.

*"The Andoni community is claiming that Ekereborokiri land belongs to them. The Andonis came into the town to fight the people of Ekereborokiri. They remove MPP3 signboard, Ekereborokiri community signboard, school and church signboards in the town."*  
**(KII with woman leader, Ekereborokiri)**

*"Ikorolo community is always intruding into our forest and Okojaja is always claiming ownership of our community. The Ikorolo people are being supported by people from Okojaja, and a late chief of Okojaja and a current chief have spearheaded the support."*  
**(KII with youth from Ekereborokiri)**

This may be classified as an information-based conflict as reflected during a focus group discussion about land boundaries.

*"...the Andonis are making demands that our land belongs to them because of wrong information. The truth must be revealed to all by the government."* **(FGD with men, Ekereborokiri)**

Farmland disputes also occur occasionally among the community during the planting season from February to March. These conflict situations however do not usually degenerate into violence as community leaders settle such issues.

# EDO STATE



## CONFLICT PROFILE: ETSAKO WEST LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA

Etsako West is made up of four clans: Uzairue, Auchu, South Ibie, Awain and Agbede. The major towns in this LGA include: Jattu, Agbede, Aviele, Jagbe and Awain, with the town of Auchu as its headquarters. The LGA has an area of 946 square kilometres and a population of 197,609 at the 2006 census. It also has the prestigious Federal Polytechnic, which is attended by students from all over the state.

Some of the communities with current conflict issues in the LGA are Imeke, Isami, Iyuku, Iyamo and Elele. The conflict issues in Etsako West LGA are mainly around land/boundary disputes. Some other less prominent conflict issues in the LGA include chieftaincy disputes, political competition and age-group conflicts.

### Land/Boundary Disputes

There is a boundary dispute between the Isami and Imeke communities. The two communities are claiming ownership of farmlands situated at their boundary with each other. Imeke community is also involved in a boundary dispute with Iyuku community, and this has been a major source of tension. A boundary dispute between the Iyamoh and Elele communities became an issue of conflict in 2013 when the Edo State University of Science and Technology was cited at the boundary between the two



communities and named after the Iyamoh Community. The disputants have since sought legal interventions to address the conflict as captured in the responses of an FGD participant in Iyamoh:

*“...Since when government has started building the university, land has become an issue in the community. Not less than ten families are dragging some piece of land now and all the cases have been referred to the court of law for settlement.”*

Similarly, Iyamoh is in conflict with Aforwa community over a piece of land situated at the boundary of the two communities. The two are laying claim to ownership of the land, which is said to be a very fertile farmland.

### **Chieftaincy Disputes**

Chieftaincy disputes are also common in the LGA, although not as rampant as land disputes. In Egono community there is an ongoing conflict over the installation of a new village head after the demise of the current one as a result of a crisis within the ruling houses over who should take the position. The matter is yet to be resolved, leaving the traditional stool of Egono still vacant.

In Ughieda Community there is a chieftaincy tussle between the two ruling houses. Although, the state government has installed a traditional ruler based on a court judgment, tensions still remain as the losing party is still dissatisfied with the decision. A similar situation exists in Iyuku community. The conflict started with an expression of dissatisfaction with the traditional ruler and resulted in the dethronement of the village head, Chief Momoh, and his replacement with another, Chief Zekeri Abubakar. The forceful dethronement of the village head led to violence resulting in the killing and maiming of several members of the community. Although the crisis has since abated, it has not been completely resolved.

In Egono Community an ongoing conflict between the royal families over who should be the next village head has resulted in the community being without a substantive village head till date. Similarly, in Odigie community, the community has not been able to install a new village head as a result of conflicts among the royal families over who should be crowned. As it stands, the community has no recognized village head. A similar situation can be found in Apana Community where the position of village head has been vacant for years because of a conflict between the two ruling families - the Itoto and the Salawi - over who should produce the next chief.

In Upper Ikhua Community conflict among the ruling houses also prevented the installation of a traditional ruler of Jagbe, the clan to which Upper Ikhua belongs, for years. A court judgment installed the most senior man in the clan as the traditional ruler; however, there are still traces of hostility and antagonism among people of the clan over the decision. This is also the case in Imiokono Community, which is also an autonomous community under the Jagbe clan.

### **Other Types of Conflict**

In Isami and Omeni communities, there is conflict as a result of residents' alignment with one of the two major political parties in Nigeria where some people are members of the People's Democratic Party (PDP) while others are members of the All Progressives Congress (APC). Conflict often ensues during political campaigns and rallies based on this divide.

Age group conflicts have also been recorded in Isami, where there are usually conflicts among newly-installed age grade groups resulting from struggles for selection of members to key executive and leadership positions such as chairman, treasurer, secretary.

## CONFLICT PROFILE: OVIA SOUTH-WEST LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA

Ovia South-West Local Government Area has an area of 2,803 square kilometres and a population of 135,356, as at the 2006 census. Its headquarters is the town of Iguobazuwa.

Although land disputes and unemployment were identified as the main issues of conflict in the LGA, various other forms of conflict were identified as well. The other conflict issues identified were: conflict arising from the uneven distribution of resources, conflicts over cult supremacy, conflicts between herdsmen and farmers, indigene/settler conflicts, and leadership tussles.

### Land/Boundary Conflicts

Land and boundary disputes are numerous within the LGA. Some of these include the land dispute between Iguogun and Umaza communities, Igue-Okunzuwa and Umaza communities over Oduba land, between Okponha Community and Ofumwengbe Community over Egboha land, between Igbogor and Ogunmwenyi communities over Egbovia land, and between Ofumwengbe Community and Obaretin Community.

In one conflict, Obaretin (Okponha) Community claim that Ofumwengbe cannot claim any land because they used to be a subordinate community under them. However, Ofumwengbe rejects this and insists they are an autonomous community on their own. The case is currently in court. Pending the court decision, the youth of both communities have remained hostile towards any attempt to cultivate the disputed land:

*“...the youth insist that everybody should stay away from the boundary until it will be decided by the court or by the elders to show them where the boundary would pass between the Okponha (Obaretin) and Ofumwengbe.” (FGD with youth from Ofumwengbe Community)*

### Fulani Cattle Herders and Farmers

Issues between the Fulani herdsmen and local farmers have been a major conflict in Ofumwengbe and Iguobazuwa communities for the last three years. The main cause of the conflict is Fulani herdsmen bringing their cattle to graze on farmlands whenever the farmers are not around and the cattle eating up the crops. This makes it impossible for farmers to reap the proceeds of their crops, which is their only source of their livelihood and income. The farmers then retaliate by attacking the cattle rearers.

Attempts to send the Fulani cattle rearers away have failed as herdsmen say they have paid money as settlement to the community leader, the Odionwere of Iguobazuwa, to stay for a number of years to ensure the continuation of their grazing activities within the community. The herdsmen have refused to leave until the number of years they have paid for have been exhausted. This conflict began in 2012 and persists to this day with the most problematic area being the Imasabemwen area.

### Conflict Arising from Embezzlement of Community Funds

In Udo-Aken Community, there is an ongoing conflict between the youths and elders. The conflict arose from elders in the community selling land that did not belong to them.

In Aighobahi-Utesi Community, there is a conflict between the Edo State Ministry of Agriculture, the Odionwere (the village head) and the village settlers which arose as a result of an abrupt change of one Forest Rentage Agent to another. It is believed that the replacement of the female agent was responsible for the increase in the tenancy rate of the forest, thus causing tension.

In Okomu-Ijaw Community the Ijaw indigenes have requested that the Yoruba land users pay rent for the land they farm on. The Yorubas' refusal to comply with the payment has caused hostility and the situation remains unresolved.

### **Conflict Arising from Uneven Distribution of Resources**

In Siluko Community, a conflict between the Ijaw youths and their Ilaje counterparts over the sharing of community proceeds still persists. The Ijaw youths refused to share these proceeds with the Ilaje people on the grounds that they are not originally from the community. This has angered the Ilaje youth who claim the community is owned by both groups and as such all proceeds from should be evenly distributed.

Similarly, there is conflict in Udo-Aken Community between elders and youths over the sharing of community proceeds. The youths are claiming that they are entitled to a share of the community proceeds, while the elders have insisted on the exclusion of the youth. The situation is currently brewing hostility between the two groups in the community.

Other such conflicts include that between the Odionwere (village head of the community) of Aighobahi Utesi Community and residents over how the community borehole is being managed, the conflict between Okomu Oil Palm Company PLC and Okomu-Ijaw Community over compensation payments, and that between the youth and elders in Igbogor Community over sharing monies accruing to the community.

### **Other Conflicts**

Other forms of conflict in the LGA include cult-related violence in Usen Community in which rival cult groups are in a battle over supremacy and territorial control of the community.

In Iguobazuwa the struggle is between two factions in the community for leadership of the youth association. The Odionwere of Iguobazuwa's obvious support for one of the groups against the other has further fuelled the conflict.

In Udo-Aken Community, the youth chairman refused to vacate the seat following the election of a new chairman by the youth group. The situation has caused a lot of tension in the community.

# DELTA STATE



## CONFLICT PROFILE: ISOKO SOUTH LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA

Isoko South Local Government Area is one of the two local governments that make up the Isoko region of Delta State. With its headquarters at Oleh town, it covers a low-lying section of the larger Niger Delta Basin, interspersed with streams, canals and rivers. It is located in a region of deciduous and evergreen forests, with patches of mangrove forest, as well as a forest reserve along the Aviara Clan area. It has a land mass of 668 square kilometres. It is comprised of 10 clans: Oleh, Aviara, Uzere, Emede, Olomoro, Igbide, Umeh, Erohwa, Enhwe and Irri, and each have a traditional ruler.

Isoko South LGA is also one of the major oil-producing areas of the state, with former Italian oil company, Agip, having one of its largest fields there. The people are of the Isoko tribe and farming, trading and fishing are their predominant occupations. Current population centres include Oleh and Olomoro.

Oil and gas exploration activities began in the area in the early 1950s, and the second oil well in Nigeria was discovered in Uzere in 1958. The massive growth of the oil and gas industry in the area has created significant environmental challenges such as gas flaring, oil spills from pipelines, deforestation and waste mismanagement. These challenges have been made more serious by

federal laws which centralised control of the oil-rich land and have allowed the local government relatively little control over industry activities.

Irri, Oleh, Igbide, Uzerhe, Emede, Ukpute, Umeli and Udeh are some of the communities that have experienced conflict within the LGA. Unemployment, illicit economic activities, government policies that marginalize and exclude, a poor education system, insecurity, and gang violence are the main reasons for conflict in the LGA. The causes of conflicts in the LGA are largely resource-based with issues of money and control of natural resources ranking as the highest factors.

Other conflicts such as leadership disputes, political disputes, cult-related conflicts, conflicts with Fulani herdsmen, religious conflicts, conflict over the poor handling and location of projects, disputes over sharing of community funds, family disputes, and land boundary disputes have also been recorded in Isoko South LGA in the past.

### **Community Leadership Tussles**

In Oleh Community, there is a leadership tussle between His Royal Majesty Odo-Ologbo and the Community Development Council (CDC) for supremacy. While Odo-Ologbo claims he is a royal figure, the community development council members claim that they were duly elected by the people to lead the community. The women's association is also embroiled in conflict, resulting in the creation of various factions within the community.

In Irri Community, there is also a serious dispute between the king and the Irri Community Development Council (CDC) over who controls resources accruing from oil proceeds and who administers the community. While the King claims he has the administrative responsibility of the community, the CDC members claim that they were elected by the people and therefore should be in charge.

Other leadership tussles within the LGA include: Aviara Community where there is a dispute over control of the Community Development Council (CDC), in Emede Community where there is a conflict within the women's association, and amongst the youth group in Olomoro Community where there was an allegation that the president hijacked youth job slots and the community's executive members embezzled public funds.

### **Natural Resources/Oil Conflicts**

In Irri Community, there is conflict between Community Development Council (CDC) and Agip Oil over the company's compliance with a sharing formula agreed on in a Memorandum of Understanding. This has fuelled tension between the community and Agip Oil. There is also a serious conflict between the Community Development Council, some oil landlords, and the king of the community over control of the community's resources. There is a similar situation in Oleh Community where there is a conflict between the oil landlords, the community's king, the Community Development Council, and the two oil companies operating in the community - Nigeria Petroleum Development Company (NPDC) and Agip.

In Emede Community, there is a conflict between the oil landlords and the king of the community where the landlords allege that the king ensures that benefits of the pipeline surveillance contracts accrue only to himself. This has fuelled resentment against the king and is also causing tension in the community.

In Uzere community, there is a conflict between the Uzere people and NPDC over its compliance to its Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the community.

### Political Conflicts

In Emede, Irri, Olomoro, Uzere, and Igbide communities there are disputes between the two dominant political parties in Nigeria, the Peoples' Democratic Party (PDP) and the All Progressives Congress (APC). The conflicts often result from their members' campaigns to win the hearts and minds of the electorate.

### Community Leadership/Kingship/Regency Conflicts

In Uzere there was conflict between the former king of the community and his subjects. The people alleged that the former king did not rule in the interest of his subjects therefore he was dethroned and a new king was installed. However, the government and other agencies have refused to recognize the new king but continue to recognise the old king, who is now in exile in the Diaspora, as the ruler of Uzere.

In Enwhe a kingship tussle led to the splitting of the community into two communities, Enwhe and Okpolo Enwhe.

In Emede, there is a conflict between the king and his subjects. The people had demanded the king carry out sacrifices to the gods, as tradition demands. However, this demand was rejected by the king on the basis of his personal religious beliefs; as a result, the people have forced the king to go into exile.

In Aviara the Odio-Ologbo and the regent are in conflict over who will be in charge of the traditional stool after the death of the current king. The Odio-Ologbo claims that he has traditional responsibility to act for three years after the death of king; however the regency is also claiming that he has the same responsibility. In the process, the whole community is divided into factions. Some are supporting the regent while others support the Odio-Ologbo. The case is currently still in court.

A similar dispute is also currently taking place in Irri where the regent and the queen, who is his step-mother, are in conflict over the control of the traditional stool of the community, dividing the community into factions. In Okpolo-Enwhe the dispute is over who will act as regent following the death of the king.

### Cult-related Conflicts

In Oleh there are conflicts among rival cult groups, especially between the Eiye Confraternity and the Black Axe (Aye). The conflicts often revolve around supremacy and control of their territories, resulting in the death of some community members.

Emede community is also experiencing cult-related conflicts between cult groups and the community people who are doing everything to kick against the cults' operations.

In Olomoro there is a conflict between cult groups and the community's vigilante group which has led to the killing of a member of the vigilante group and the houses of several cult members being burnt down in retaliation.

### Land and Boundary Disputes

In Aviara there is a conflict in the Ukpudi Aviara quarters between a family and the community over the land where a primary school has been built. The family is demanding replacement for the land to enable them to continue their farming activities. However, the community has refused to replace the land saying that the family's forefathers had voluntarily given the land for the benefit of the whole community several decades ago. The case is currently in court.

Oleh and Olomoro communities are currently in conflict over land boundaries. This has resulted in clashes between the two communities and several deaths as well as the razing of several houses. Similar land disputes over farmland are rife within both communities.

There is a conflict between Emede community and a neighbourhood in the community over the ownership Eru Lake. The conflict is several decades old, but the matter has not yet been settled.

There is a boundary dispute between Okpolo-Enwhe and Enwhe communities. The two communities used to be a single community before a conflict divided them, but their boundaries were not well delineated. A series of land disputes are ongoing among the quarters within these communities as well.

In Igbide there is land dispute between the Igbi family and the Friday family and the case is still in court. In Uweye community there is an ongoing dispute among the people and the community's executive council over the sale of community land meant for a playground.

### **Disputes over Sharing of Community Funds**

In Irri Community, there is a conflict between the oil landlords, the king and the CDC over the sharing of proceeds from Agip Oil with the oil landlords complaining that the sharing formula laid down is not being adhered to.

In Oleh there is a dispute between the landlords and the CDC over sharing of proceeds from the NPDC. The landlord families have complained that they were not given their own share in the proceeds.

### **Other Conflicts**

In Emede the poor location, handling, and execution of projects have caused conflicts between the contractors and the community people. This is also the case in Olomoro where the wrong location and poor handling of projects have caused conflicts.

Also in Emede the shrine to the Eke deity, which is the war juju of the Emede people and situated in Uruaka, was burnt down. A church was built in its place bringing conflict to the community between those who supported the act and those who opposed it. The community is also dealing with a persistent conflict between the Fulani herdsmen and farmers in the community who complain that their crops are being destroyed by the herdsmen's cattle.

## **CONFLICT PROFILE: NDOKWA WEST LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA**

Ndakwa West Local Government Area has an area of 816 square kilometres and a population of 149,325, according to the 2006 census. The people of Ndakwa are predominantly farmers, fishermen and petty traders. Its headquarters is in the town of Kwale and its major towns are Onicha Ukwuani, Utagbe Uno, Abi, Ogume, Emu and Utagbe Ogbe.

Although money, natural resources and religious beliefs were all considered causes of conflict, needs and values were the highest ranking causes identified in the LGA. Land competition, unemployment/poverty, insecurity, ethnic/religious tension, shootings/killings, and illicit economic activities, and corruption were also among the highest factors for conflict in the LGA.

Community youth, elders, and community leaders were identified as the principal actors in conflicts within the LGA, while issues of land dispute, the activity of Fulani herdsmen, and corruption were the major manifestations of conflict.



Umusadege, Umuseti, Amoji, Ogbeani, and Utagba-Ogbe and are some of the communities that are either currently in conflict within the LGA.

### **Land/Boundary Disputes**

There are land disputes between Ibabu and Iselegu, two communities that share a boundary, as well as between Umuseti and Ebendo, Umusedeti and Beneku, Emuobodoeti and Igbe-Ogume, Ebendo and Ushie communities, Amoji and Umuchime-Ogume, Etua-Ukpo and Nsukwa, Igbe-Ogume and Ogbeole, and among Obodougwa Ogume, Ebendo and Ogbeole communities. There are also struggles between families in Ogbeani Community.

### **Leadership Conflicts**

In Ogbeani Community there is a conflict between the old CDC and its newly elected members. The newly elected members complain that the old CDC members are still presenting themselves as members even after handing over their positions. This is also the case in Umuseti Community where the old CDC chairman who has handed over still continues to perform functions that the new chairman ought to perform.

In Umuseti-Uno there is a conflict between the former youth chairman and the present youth chairman. In Umusadege-Uno the appointment of a new president is brewing hostility in the community, especially among the youths. In Okwele Abbi the election of the youth leaders is causing tension in the community.

In Emuobodo Eti a parallel community governing structure led by different prominent chiefs has been formed as a result of a community leadership dispute.

### **Fulani Herdsmen Conflicts**

In Amoji there is a conflict between farmers and Fulani herdsmen where farmers have complained that the Fulani cattle have been destroying their crops and demanding that the Fulani leave their communities. However, the Fulani has refused to leave saying they have paid for the land they occupy. About four people have died as a result of this conflict. There is also a conflict between Ibabu Community farmers and Fulani herdsmen following similar complaints by the farmers.

In Olieogo-Umuseti Community, however, the conflict situation between community farmers and Fulani herdsmen seems to have been resolved after the cattle rearers moved their cattle away from the community.

### **Oil Conflicts**

In Ogbeani there is a conflict between the CDC and Midwestern Oil & Gas, the oil company operating in the community. The CDC has claimed that the company refused to recognize its new community leaders because the leaders were not supported by a prominent local chief. The situation has persisted despite the council of community chiefs pressing the oil company for the recognition of the new leaders.

Similarly, in Umuseti Community, the CDC is in conflict with Pillar Oil who they complain has not duly recognized them, despite giving recognition to the old CDC. This lack of recognition has been attributed to the fact that the old CDC did not properly handed power and authority over to the new CDC.

Other forms of conflict identified in the LGA include cult-related conflict and violence in Emuobodoeti where cult group activities have led to deaths and the destruction of properties as well as the intimidation of innocent citizens.

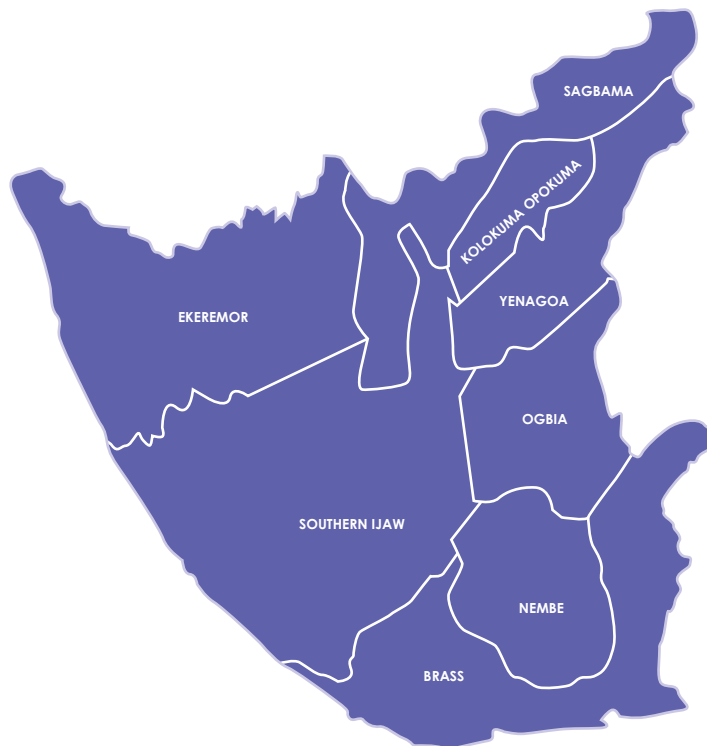


### **Conflict over Electricity**

In Ogbeani an arrangement between the community and the local power company to pay their electricity bill in bulk has resulted in conflict. The community reneged on an earlier arrangement with the company and insisted the oil company in the community, Midwestern Oil & Gas, make the electricity bill payment. The company has refused to agree to this arrangement and this has led to the accumulation of a huge bill, forcing the power company to disconnect electricity from the community, further fuelling the conflict between the oil company and the community.

Finally, in Igbe-Ogume a peculiar conflict situation which started as an interpersonal conflict but escalated into a conflict between families has since engulfed the whole community. The conflict began over a case of adultery committed by one Mr. John Nwase against a married woman. The community asked that the man perform a sacrifice in order to appease the gods but the request was refused. As a result, the community stopped the man from continuing in his position as an age grade leader and threatened to ostracize him. This led to conflict between the Adishi Family and the Umunzete Family as the act committed was believed to have caused the death of the woman's husband and has led to hostility within the community.

# BAYELSA STATE



## CONFLICT PROFILE: BRASS LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA

Brass Local Government Area is located on the coast of Bayelsa State and has a coastline of approximately 90 kilometres on the Bight of Bonny. It has an area of 1,404 square kilometres and the Edumanom National Forest occupies much of this landmass. Brass LGA has a population of 185,049, as at the 2006 census, and is made up of 152 towns and villages, with its headquarters located in the town of Twon-Brass. Although considered relatively peaceful, some of the conflict incidents identified in Brass LGA include politically-motivated conflict, conflicts between oil companies and host communities, land competition, unemployment-related conflicts, community leadership disputes and land and boundary disputes. Of these, unemployment and poverty-related conflicts were identified as the only conflicts currently being experienced in the LGA.

An inadequate health system, poor water and sanitation, and poor power supply were identified as major conflict sources in the LGA. Money issues were also identified as a major cause of conflict followed by natural resources and basic needs. Values and beliefs were not found to be major causes of conflict within Brass LGA.

### Land and Boundary Disputes

A number of communities in Brass LGA have communal land disputes. Egweama Community is in a land dispute with Liama Community over a portion of land where the Barakuda Oil Well was discovered. The communities had been relatively peaceful until oil was discovered there and the dispute is still ongoing. Egweama Community also has another on land dispute with the Akassa/Sangana Community over a satellite town called Oruokolo.

Okpoama Community and Twon Brass Community are in a dispute over boundary land which the Okpoama Community claims was given to Twon and has since been washed away by erosion. Twon Community however claims that their boundary extended well beyond the eroded land. Okpoama is also in conflict with Odioma Community over ownership of Ibidi and Akabele lands as well as with Diema Community over land along their boundary, though Diema Community is claiming that they do not have any boundary with Okpoama Community. Within Okpoama Community some families are embroiled in major conflicts over land.

There are ongoing land disputes among some families in Sangana resulting from the prevalence of erosion in the community. Furthermore, Sangana Community is in a land dispute with the neighbouring Igbematuru Community in Southern Ijaw Local Government Area over land boundaries and access to a river.

Other communities having land disputes are Cameron Ama, Sambo Ama, and Kemmer Ama. The dispute between Cameron Ama and Sambo Ama revolves around boundaries in Twon Brass Kingdom and Imbikiri Community, portions of which both communities are laying claim. On the other hand, the conflict between Kemmer Ama and Cameron Ama is over a portion of land in Kemmer Ama. There is also a dispute between Minibie and Apparanbie in Akassa Community over a portion of land where oil was recently discovered.

### Disputes over Power

There is a serious dispute between Okpoama Community youths and Agip Oil Company over electricity supply which has lasted since 2012 with no resolution in sight. The youths complained that the oil company, a tenant in their community, is enjoying uninterrupted power supply while the community's power supply is epileptic. In reaction to this situation, the community youths closed down Agip activities by blocking the gate to the company's premises. They also seized company vehicles in Twon and burnt them. This triggered yet another conflict between Twon youths and Okpoama youths. Furthermore, the youths of Okpoama Community seized all the generators owned by the community chiefs, as they believed that the chiefs had collected money from the oil company.

Odioma and Sangana communities are also experiencing similar power supply-generated conflicts.

### Political Disputes

Election-related disputes between members of the PDP and APC political parties were noted in Okpoama, Imbikiri, Sambo Ama, Cameron Ama, Egweama, Liama, Sangana and Ewoama. These resulted in the destruction of banners, billboards, posters, party secretariats and even the burning of houses.

There was also a political dispute in Odioma Community between the PDP, APC, and the Social Democratic Party (SDP). The residents complained they were the only Community in Brass Constituency II that had not produced a member representing the constituency at the Bayelsa State House of Assembly and decided not to give up the slot to Okpoama Community. This translated in there being no member representing Brass Constituency II in the state House of Assembly.

### **Employment Opportunities-Related Disputes**

Disputes over employment opportunities within communities, between communities, or disputes between communities and companies are rampant across the LGA. This is because the few available jobs are either hijacked by persons in authority or shared unevenly amongst a few groups.

There is a dispute between Twon Brass, Okpoama, and Ewoama communities, and Agip Oil Company over employment slots. Similarly, there is a conflict between Sangana Community and Conoil and Texaco due to sentiments among community members that the youth in the community are being denied job opportunities.

Odioma Community is also in a dispute with oil companies in the community over the perception that the few job opportunities that were supposed to be given to community members were given to outsiders.

### **Leadership Conflicts**

There is a leadership dispute in Odioma following the death of King Ogoni XXI. There is also a crisis amongst the youths over leadership of the youth organisation with some in the community alleging that the tenure of the current executive has elapsed and the organisation has refused to conduct fresh elections.

In Minibie Community in Akassa a leadership dispute involving all the royal families has developed as a result of the death of the former king and who will succeed him. As a result, the community has not been able to install a new king.

Other leadership tussles include the imposition of youth leaders by powerful people in Odioma, Sambo Ama and Cameron Ama, as well as a dispute between Sambo Ama and Cameron Ama over who is to be the king of the community.

Other forms of conflict are a dispute over the uneven distribution of scholarship slots by Agip in Sambo Ama, Cameron Ama and Okpoama in which the scholarship slots for children of the poor were said to have been hijacked by powerful people in the CDC and the chiefs' council.

Also, oil conflicts have arisen as a result of activities of the Joint Task Force (JTF) against oil bunkers. Many of youth across the LGA who lost their means of livelihood went into sea piracy, killing, raping and stealing from citizens on the waterways.

## **CONFLICT PROFILE: KOLOKUMA/OPOKUMA LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA**

Kolokuma/Opokuma Local Government Area has an area of 361 square kilometres, much of which is occupied by the Bayelsa National Forest. It has a population of 77,292, as at the 2006 census, and its headquarters is the town of Kaiama. The major districts and towns in Kolokuma are: Akaibiri, Aya-Ama, Ayibabiri, Ayokoroma, Gbarama, Igbaniwa, Igbedi, Kalama, Odi, Ofonibiri, Okolobaa, Olobiri, Oyobu, Sabagea, and Sampou.

Only about a quarter of questionnaire respondents agreed that there were recent and ongoing conflicts in the LGA, and they believed inadequate power supply was a major source of what conflicts there were.

Other notable recent and ongoing sources of conflicts in the LGA include leadership/chieftaincy tussles, impropriety around compensation sharing, land and boundary disputes, employment-related disputes, cult-related violence, conflicts over location of government projects, political

disputes, and conflicts arising from religious belief systems. Money matters and issues over natural resources were also major causes of conflict in this LGA.

These varied conflicts have manifested in mass protests led by women and youth, arrests, litigations, mob action, and displacement.

### **Land and Boundary Disputes**

Kaiama and Okorotomu communities are in conflict over land ownership with Okorotomu claiming that they are the owner of a vast tract of land occupied by Kaiama community. However, Kaiama claims the Okorotomu people served as slaves to Olobiri community and as such cannot be land owners. The matter is presently in court.

A similar conflict is ongoing between the Okorotomu and Olobiri communities. The people of Olobiri also claim that the Okorotomu people served them as slaves, to the extent of washing plates and pots during the Egbesu (deity) Festival, and therefore cannot lay claim to ownership of the land in dispute.

Other such cases are between the Ubabiri of Igbedi Community and the Burudani of Okoloba Community. In that conflict the matter had gone to court, but both parties later agreed to settle out of court. However the matter is yet to be amicably settled.

In one case between Kaiama Community and Mr. Yeibake Dinipre Clifford, Kaiama claims that all natural lakes in the community belong to the community in general while Mr. Yeibake claims that the particular land where a lake is situated belongs to him, thus any royalties for use of the lake should be paid to him. The matter is presently in the Appeals Court.

### **Leadership/Chieftaincy Tussles**

In Igbedi Community, there is a chieftaincy tussle between Chief S.S.P. Gbaranbiri and Engr. Eke Duncan which led to the formation of a parallel government in all arms of the community organization including a parallel youth executive council, women's executive council and CDC. This issue remains unresolved.

A similar situation is also found in Ayakoro Ama community. The tussle is between two major families, the Egbe and Itikiribo, driven by the acting paramount rulers on either side.

Odi Community is experiencing a similar situation. The youth association has been suspended due to the imposition of a candidate by prominent members of the community against the wish of the majority of the people.

### **Conflicts over Sharing of Proceeds Accruing to Communities**

The uneven distribution of the compensation paid to the Odi Community by the federal government as a result of a military invasion of the community in 1999 is still causing serious conflict in the community. The conflict is largely between a committee led by Col. Emmanuel Akpoluma for the distribution of the compensation and some aggrieved members of the community who felt the committee was not equitable and accountable in the discharge of their responsibility. The conflict has been ongoing since early 2015 and the matter is still in court.

Parts of Kaiama, Okorotomu, and Olobiri communities, which make up a political ward, are faced with a similar situation. In 2012, relief materials were sent by the government and individuals to help those that were displaced by floods; however the manner in which the materials were shared led to fighting among members of these communities. There are still feelings of hostility among these communities till today.

### **Conflicts over Non-payment of Damages by Companies**

There is a conflict between the Abuwari Community and the IDSL seismic operators of Shell Oil Company over unpaid damages. Abuwari community people have written several letters to IDSL with no favourable reply and the community youth are threatening to react should workers of the company set foot on their land.

### **Employment-related Disputes**

Employment is another cause of conflict in the local government area. Employment opportunities from government, companies or other agencies are not evenly shared amongst families in communities across virtually all the communities in the local government. Those who feel short-changed are angry and there have been threats to life in Kaiama, Opokuma, Olobiri, and Orubiri as a result.

### **Cult-related Conflicts**

In communities across the local government, especially in Igbedi, Sabagrea, Okoloba, Akaranbiri, Gbaranbiri, and Odi communities, cult activities and clashes have led to serious injuries and the deaths of people, as well as the destruction of properties. These conflicts arise between different groups over who gets more influence in the communities. Participants in FGDs were afraid to mention the names of the different cult groups despite assurances that everything they said would be treated as confidential and would not be shared with anyone. These cult groups often strike during social gatherings such as burials, and political campaigns.

### **Conflicts over Location of Government Projects**

In Sabagrea Community it was reported that projects which provide amenities for public use end up being diverted by individuals for private use. In same community the use of sub-standard materials for projects has caused conflicts between contractors and members of the community.

In Olobiri, a water project was to be sited in one compound, however youths of the community who felt the project should be sited elsewhere mobilized and stopped the project. The project remains unimplemented.

### **Political Disputes**

The inequitable distribution of political power between Odi and other communities in Kolga constituency I, comprising Odi, Kaiama, Olobiri, Sampou and Kalama, has been gradually building feelings of marginalization and resentment in other communities. The people of Kaiama argue that since the inception of the democratic government in Nigeria in 1999, all the members representing Kolga Constituency I have come from the Odi community.

Similarly, the Opokuma Clan have alleged that since 1999, only the communities in the Kolokuma Clan have had the opportunity to produce representatives for the Kolga Constituency II, at least until the most recent elections. The Opokuma Clan is made up of nine communities: Orubiri, Gbaranama, Ayakoroama, Oyobu, Abuwari, Akaranbiri, Igbainwari, Ekpuwari, and Gbaranbiri, and the issue has resulted in a gradual build up of hostility and resentment, although it has yet to develop into violence.

### **Conflicts Arising from Religious Beliefs and Practices**

In Olobiri there is subtle tension between Christians and the worshippers of the Egbesu deity. The conflict often arises from the use of umbrellas while passing in front of the Egbesu shrine when it is raining. Traditions bar the use of umbrellas while passing in front of the Egbesu shrine, no matter how heavy the rains. However, the Christians in the community have refused to adhere to these beliefs, thus causing conflict.

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# CONFLICT PROFILES

FOR 10 LGAs IN  
FIVE NIGER DELTA STATES